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THREE TATTERED ILLUSIONS

An Examination of Some Recent Views of Russia

By RAPHAEL R. ABRAMOVITCH

IN THE fateful re-examination of social and political values perhaps one of the most crucial questions is the character of Russian Bolshevism. Is Soviet Russia still a factor of human and social progress?

"Russia is still remote from Communism"—a British journalist stated recently in the *New York Times*. But is Russia really on her way to that remote goal? Is she not rather—to put it bluntly—on the march to quite a different system, for instance, to that pictured in George Orwell's terrifying Utopia "1984".

The men who pose that question are sophisticated individuals. They understand well the repressive character of the Stalinist regime. Yet some of them are interested in rescuing some aspect of its policy for the sake of posterity—or their own dreams. The recent writings of the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty, the Polish-British historian Isaac Deutscher and the Austrian journalist Julius Braunthal place these problems squarely in the center of liberal polemics. Without attempting, within the confines of a magazine article, to draw a balance sheet of Bolshevism I would like to examine some of their ideas.

* * *

The acute longing of the intelligentsia for a new world of justice and freedom and the need to reconcile these hopes with the Russian reality has led a number of them to a mystic formula, compounded in equal parts of pious apology and wishful illusions. These individuals do not consider themselves Communists, and do have to a greater or lesser extent, some knowledge of the ugly truth about the Soviet system. They know about the terror and the labor camps. They are repelled by the police state and they are aware of the poverty and misery of the population. At times they even publicly denounce some dark aspect of Soviet reality. Yet they still feel that Russia is essentially "Socialist," and, seek

to reconcile their awareness of the horror with this claim. The result has been a wierd political schizophrenia.

A leading example is the well-known French writer Merleau-Ponty, author of the recent book *Humanisme et Terreur.** As one of Sartre's closest associates and as a contributing editor to the existentialist magazine *Les Temps Modernes,* Ponty knows the full truth about Soviet terror. Yet he insists that although "violence and deception are official in the USSR, humanism prevails in the everyday life, while in the democracies it is the other way around: the official principles are humane, but the practice is that of deception and violence." When he speaks of "official principles" of the USSR Ponty probably has in mind the avowed aim of the Bolsheviks to establish the "dictatorship of the proletariat," which of course means violence. But is not the Soviet constitution, too, a part of the "official principles" of the Soviet? And when Ponty speaks of the official principles of the democracies doesn't he have in mind their constitution, their Magna Carta, Declaration of the Rights of the Man, Declaration of Independence? But if so, "official theory" in both cases is "humanitarian." Thus the real controversy is not the one formulated by Ponty, but is the question: which group of countries, the Western democracies or the "peoples democracies"—both proclaiming high and lofty principles of freedom and humanity, provide more freedom and humanitarism in practice for their people?

Proceeding from this conception of the "terrorist appearance" and the "humanitarian practice," of the USSR, Ponty goes on: "The death sentence against Socrates and the Dreyfus affair do not deprive Athens and France of their "humanitarian" reputations. There is no ground for applying a different criterion to the USSR."

But such are shabby sophisms from a philosopher.

In what way can one compare the death sentence against Socrates or the Dreyfus trial with the twenty-year terror in Russia? In France, the Dreyfus Affair was an exception, not the rule, of justice. Dreyfus, who was innocent, was convicted not by order of the government, but by some narrowminded military judges, who were convinced by Colonel Henri's skillful forgery of the *borderau* that they were trying an actual spy. This was a judicial crime but not a "show trial" in which everyone, from the head of the government down to the 'judges' and the defen-

* Gallinard, 1949.

dant, in a common agreement, tell deliberate lies to deceive the people—and to sentence individuals to death for crimes which everyone knows they never committed. In France there was only one Dreyfus Affair. But the judicial error was corrected later by the French democracy in a brilliant counter-attack led by the progressive, radical and socialist elements. But where is the Emile Zola of Soviet Russia?

The condemnation of perfectly innocent persons has become part of the system in the USSR. As David Rousset puts it in his splendid "Appeal" against the Soviet labor camps: "The system of terror and camps works in a society like a cancer in a human body. . . . Where it appears, men, both ruler and slaves are inescapably lost. Such a system can never remain just an accident on the road toward human emancipation—whatever the intentions and the good will." (Figaro, Nov. 12, 1949.

In fact, among the thousands of innocent persons pronounced guilty at the Soviet "show trials" (we need not even mention the hundreds of thousands who have been exiled or killed without benefit of a trial), can Merleau-Ponty point to a single case where the accused was given the opportunity of freely defending himself, a single case where he succeeded in obtaining vindication? What are indeed the "grounds for not applying the same criterion to Russia?"

Ponty knows that himself. Speaking of Marx's concept of proletarian dictatorship, he adds: "However, if one enters the game of violence, there is a chance that he will stay in it forever."

* * *

PONTY knows the answer, but in his political schizophrenia, claims Stalin is only "in principle" maintaining a "dictatorship of the proletariat" and what really prevails in Russia is new and loftier "human relations." At times, Merleau-Ponty himself becomes aware of the contradictions in which he is enmeshed, and in such cases he resorts to this final argument: "History is irrational. There are periods when intellectuals are not needed and when lucidity is prohibited." At such times writers and philosophers cannot and must not attempt to supply answers to the practical questions of politics. "Is it our fault that western humanitarianism has become perverted because it is at the same time a war machine, and that the Marxian experiment (in the USSR) can only exist by changing its character?" "Only by changing its character" —let us bear that phrase in mind.

According to Merleau-Ponty, Stalin's foreign policy is not dictated by imperialistic motives, nor is the Soviet economy based on production for war. He is further convinced that Stalin is not in need of, and therefore not out to conquer, foreign markets, and that "strategically the USSR and the Communists are on the defensive." (As in China and South Asia, for instance!) Elsewhere he writes: "In reality, the so-called 'Russian Expansion' in Europe began at Stalingrad and ended with the battle of Prague and at the frontiers of Yugoslavia. At that time, no one protested against this 'expansion.' What has changed since then? Is it that Russia does not conduct free elections everywhere? But what about the recent elections in Greece? And if the Russians have exiled some Polish and Baltic families, it should also be remembered that there are 15,000 Jews in Bergen-Belsen, and that English troops are stationed at the border of Palestine."

Of course—Greek elections, Bergen-Belsen and British imperialism! I was really grateful that he did not mention Negro lynchings in the U. S. A.

The point which perhaps deserves a more detailed analysis is the thesis to which I subscribe emphatically, that the acid test of any regime is that system of human relations which originate under it or are created by it.

One would have to write more than one book to picture for the non-Russian reader the sort of "human relations" built in the twenty years of Stalin's autocratic rule. I hope Ponty include the rights of individual freedom in the concept of "human relations?" Human dignity? Gorki's "Man—how proud it sounds?" Social equality? The right of unhampered creative activity in the arts and sciences? Undoubtedly he does. But in that case let him point out in which of the enumerated spheres of Soviet reality that "practical humanitarianism" is to be found which he contrasts with the "practice of violence and deception" allegedly prevailing in the countries of formal democracy? Let him examine the sum total of these liberties in the Russia of 1918, or even of the civil-war period of 1919-20, and then compare it with the state of these same liberties in 1930, 1937-8, 1946 and 1949. And let him answer then whether in practice "Soviet humanitarianism" is on the upgrade or whether it is irresistibly rolling down hill. And then let him answer whether or not the Soviet Union has not become the most inhuman type of society.

LET me add a few illustrations. The prominent literary historian and critic of the left-Social Revolutionary wing, R. Ivanov-Razumnik, the teacher and friend of Andre Biely and Yessenin, the man who inspired Alexander Blok to write his famous "The Twelve", the man who had believed that the marching columns of the November 1917 revolutionaries were led by "Jesus Christ in a chaplet of white roses,"—was arrested during the Yezhov-purges of 1937 and spent almost two years in various Moscow prisons. After his death in Germany in 1946, his diary was found. Here is a digest of a number of passages:

• On December 3, 1937, my fellow inmate Dr. Kutrglass was taken for questioning. For seven days he was interrogated without interruption, without a minute of sleep, without being permitted to lie down even for a short time. Day and night he was forced to stand on his swollen feet and, when he was not being questioned, he had to stand with his face against the wall, without however being permitted to lean against it. Dr. Kurtglass, a military surgeon, was accused of participating in the Tukhachevsky 'conspiracy.' He was a man of exceptional courage and physical endurance, and he did not 'confess.' So he was taken to the infamous prison at Lefortovo, where a genuine system of medieval tortures had been installed. There he confessed.

• In April 1938, I was taken from my cell No. 45 in the Butyrka prison to the prison at Lubianka. My first week there was spent in the "doghouse," where 45 people lay on a bare stone floor, squeezed together literally like sardines. It was terribly hot and there was no ventilation. We lay almost naked, clad only in shirts. One of my new neighbors, a Communist director of some Soviet industrial trust, was questioned every day. Sometimes he would come back by himself; sometimes he would be brought back on a stretcher. One night, as we lay back to back, our shirts became so stuck to each other that in the morning I was unable to tear away from him: the mucilage was the blood which was flowing from his welt-covered back. He was taken to a hospital, and when he came back to our cell 45, a few weeks later, he was a mere shadow of a man. After a few days he was again taken to the hospital, and he died there.

• A Major of the NKVD frontier guard, a Volga-German Communist named Sabelfeld, received the same treatment in the Butyrka prison itself. After a long series of brutal beatings he declared a hunger strike in protest. This went on for ten days after which he was again taken for interrogation. "Oh, you want to frighten us by your hunger strikes," he was told by one of his torturers. "We are not easily frightened. Croak if you want to, but now open your mouth." When Sabelfeld opened it, the NKVD official spat thickly

into it: "Here is some nourishment for you." Sabelfeld tried to commit suicide, but he was rescued.

• Another fellow-inmate was a young Georgian, the son of a famous Social Democrat, the Duma Deputy Lomtatidze. When his father died in the Tzarist prison, Lenin himself promised his mother that "the party would adopt the boy." The widow later married another Bolshevik leader, the GPU prosecutor, Katanyan. The boy was brought up by his step-father, became a Communist and was given a high position in the administration. When Katanyan became a victim of Yezhov, his step-son was also arrested. He was taken severely many times but, proud and fiery Georgian that he was, he always returned to the cell, chin high, declaring that nobody would ever force him to sign a fake "confession." One day one of the interrogating officers of the NKVD ordered the guards to force the young man to his knees and to lower his head. Then the "judge" urinated over his face and head. The young man signed the confession; this inhuman humiliation had destroyed his dignity and his will to resist When he came back to the cell, he became hysterical, suffered a nervous collapse, and for a long time would not look at his fellow prisoners.

ABOUT 200 pages of Razumnik's diary are filled with the detached description of these and similar horrors. Razumnik himself was not harmed. They sought to intimidate him largely by brutal moral offences, shoutings and threats. Among the more than one thousand prisoners who were his cell-mates during two years, only a minority were subjected to the tortures he describes. The majority, less obstinate, got away with a few blows in the face or in the back.

This picture of prison brutality is typical not only of these two years. It has been and it is still the usual pattern of the GPU-NKVD "search for truth." The same procedure was used in the secret Communist prison of Barcelona during the Spanish civil war and is today employed in Hungary, East Germany and Poland.

Let the reader consult in Modern Review of Summer 1949 Dr. Julius Margolin's description of life in Soviet Labor camps of which he was an inmate from 1939 to 1945. Let him read or re-read Markoosha Fisher's "My Lives in Russia," "I Chose Freedom" by Vistor Kravchenko, Vladimir Petrov's "Soviet Gold" or Iv. Ivanov's account of the mass-execution of 2,000 "Trotskyites" at the camp of Vorkoota in Modern Review of June 1948, and he will realize the actual character of Soviet humanism in every day life.

ISAAC DEUTSCHER another political schizophrenic, has recently stirred much discussion by his biography of Stalin and a number of articles in various magazines. He approaches the issue of Bolshevism from another direction than Merleau-Ponty. He is interested not in philosophical, moral or human relations, but in economics, power politics, and particularly foreign policy. Equipped with a considerable knowledge of the subject and a remarkable journalistic ability, Deutscher gives us a detailed analysis of Stalin's political activity, with particular emphasis on the period of Stalin's one-man rule. But there are two different books in this voluminous work. The first, and longer one, is a critical description of Stalin's policies, the second, an explanation of Stalin's motives, apparently written in the belief that *"tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner."* The first book might have been written by a Menshevik. No one but a Communist or a fellow traveller seeking to justify Stalin's policies regardless of historical truth or the writer's own judgment, could have written the second.

Deutscher's characterizations of various Stalin policies—the maneuvers to win control of the party, the collectivization of 1929-30, the line in Germany in 1930-1933; the "show trials"; the bloody purges of the Yezhov period; the pact with Hitler, or the blunders during the first period of the war—all these might have been copied from articles in the Menshevik "Socialist Courier," a magazine which Deutscher, incidentally, hardly ever cites.

In these sections, his sharp comments of Stalin's contradictions, of his political inconsistency, of his lack of definite policy in regard to the most important problems, of his utterly incomprehensible shortsightedness (as for example, his German "social-fascist" policy of 1931-33)—all these would make any anti-Bolshevik proud. But each time that Deutscher the Menshevik describes a particularly black moment in the development of Stalin's policy, another Deutscher,—Deutscher the Communist—bobs up with an apologia for that policy which his alter ego had so justly attacked.

I would be inclined to consider Deutscher's case morally analogous to that of Ponty who is sincere but for two circumstances. The first is Deutscher's much too slick and eloquent apology for Stalin in those passages where he passes from description to "explanation." The other is the omission or bare mention of important and germane details. When Deutscher dwells, for example, on the negative results of forcible farm

collectivization, he omits completely any mention of the terrible famine which decimated the Ukraine in 1932-33. That famine cost the Ukraine five million lives. Entire villages were wiped out and a mass wave of cannibalism swept over the area, gaining such momentum that thousands of persons were convicted of the crime and sent to concentration camps. The writer is personally familiar with the details of one instance wherein a group of "cannibals" consisting of 300 women and 70 men was deported to the Solvetski Islands. The charge was that they had killed and eaten little children and old people weakened by starvation, and others were arrested digging up freshly buried corpses.

The Ukraine famine was not a crop failure brought about by natural causes, such as drought or excessive rain. It was an artificially created famine deliberately planned by Stalin's government. Deutscher may find in Kravchenko's book eye-witness testimony of the extent to which Stalin—by confiscating the entire stock of grain in the barns of the peasants—systematically and deliberately condemned to starvation and to death peasant families which refused to submit to collectivization. Not a word about the famine appears; possibly because even he might have been hard pressed for an "explanation" of the deliberate murder of several million persons.

* * *

ANOTHER omission: Deutscher is a native of Poland. As an active political person he knew the Polish Socialist parties and its leaders. Possibly he even knew personally Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Movement of Poland. Yet not once does he mention them—or their tragic fate. This opportunity was clearly indicated in his detailed account of Stalin's plan for the partition of Poland and the annexation of her Eastern provinces. In his eagerness to whitewash Stalin's policy (again, as usual, with many critical comments and polemical reservations), Deutscher choses to overlook the connection between the murder of the two outstanding Jewish-Polish Socialist leaders and Stalin's general plans. Yet Stalin had a perfectly defined plan concerning Poland as far back as December 1941, or even earlier. The Katyn incident was only a pretext for Stalin to break off relations with the Polish government in London. In order to carry out his plan, Stalin attempted to proclaim all Polish Jews and Ukrainians as citizens not of Poland, but of the Soviet Union. Accordingly the Polish passports of Erlich and Alter were taken away

from them at the time of their arrest, although this was a direct violation of the Stalin-Sikorski agreement. It is also known that in his conversation with the Polish ambassador Stanislaw Kot, Stalin tried to persuade the Poles not to take any Polish Jews into their armies, on the ground that "Jews would not fight for Poland. . . ."

Can it be that Deutscher does not know that the fate of Poland played an important part as far back as 1939 in the negotiations which Stalin conducted simultaneously with the Western powers and with von Ribbentrop?

The ideas of Merleau-Ponty and Deutscher are still characteristic of sections of the radical intelligentsia. This attitude manifested itself during and immediately after the war on an even larger scale, and was common even in circles which had no attachment either with socialism or with radicalism. The Soviet regime has created something positive, even though it has at time resorted to rather brutal methods—the argument would go. In thirty years it has succeeded in making up for three centuries of backwardness caused by the Tzarist regime. And it is on the basis of such historico-philosophical considerations that people were ready to grant an amnesty to the Stalin regime. Unfortunately this so-called "realistic" approach to the complex problem of Stalinism has no basis in reality, but is grounded instead on over-simplifications.

* * *

THE widespread notion of the backwardness of pre-revolutionary Russia—though basically correct,—has been grossly exaggerated by many authors, consciously or unconsciously for the purpose of heightening the achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution. Deutscher goes so far as to call the Russians on the eve of the revolution a "nation of savages." Actually, for all her relative backwardness, Russia before the revolution was neither a country without culture, nor a country of illiterates. And it is an error to think that she was devoid of a large-scale modern industry, of railroads or of large cities.

During the three decades immediately preceding the First World War—a period of time approximately equal to that of the Soviet regime —Tzarist Russia increased her coal output 12 fold (or in the language of Soviet statistics by 1200 percent), her iron production by 1100 percent, the cotton textile industry by 300 percent and railroad mileage by 300 percent. By 1913, Russia was the largest producer of grain and, with fifty percent of the world's total, of oil, as well, and one of the

major producers of lumber, manganese, etc. Russian textile and machine factories were among the largest in Europe, many of them employing tens of thousands of workers. The industrial proletariat increased from 720,000 in 1880 to more than 3,000,000 in 1913.

This rapid expansion took place under a backward political system and in a capitalist or largely still pre-capitalist country. Yet it was achieved without even a small part of those terrible sacrifices which the "Socialist planned economy" of the Soviet regime imposes on its workers. And, as shown below, the real wages of the Russian workers at the time of Tzarist-capitalist industrialization was much higher than those which has prevailed during the "Socialist industrialization."

It was not only in the field of economics that Russia was making progress. After the epoch of the "Great Reforms" of the 1860's there developed a system of schools, hospitals, municipal and "zemstvo" (rural districts) autonomy: Russia had trial by jury which was considered among the most advanced in Europe, and a number of other elements of spiritual and material culture. There was a literature, including a number of world-famous poets and novelists. Music, theatre, ballet, too, were represented by artists of universal fame. There were scores of first-rate universities and higher technological institutes, accessible not only to the rich, which attracted thousands of students from the mass of the people, among them the flower of the radical and socialist youth of the time. And, after 1905, hundreds of newspaper and magazines representing every political tendency, including socialism and Bolshevism, were printed widely. There were also labor unions, cooperative organizations, societies for the education of the workers, people's universities, etc.

* * *

THIS does not mean that Tzarist Russia was a free country and that the Russian revolutionists were deceiving themselves and the world when they denounced the system of political despotism, of court intrigues, of anti-Semitic and nationalistic reaction, the suppression of free thought and the exploitation of an ignorant and poverty-stricken peasantry. All that the Russia revolutionists said was true. Nonetheless, our accusations and our struggle against Tzarism must not be interpreted as the desperate wail of a degenerating and primitive people that had been reduced to the state of a nation of "savages." The revolution was

the cry of a young, growing and great people, eager to advance at a faster pace; it was a protest against the fetters that cut into the flesh of the young giant, hampering his rapid progress and development. The removal of Tzarism and of the anachronistic rule of the privileged nobility, the modernization of the political system and of its rusty administrative machine, the rise to power of the more progressive classes of modern society could clearly speed up the economic and cultural development of the Russian people. Since this could not be achieved by peaceful means because of the stupidity and suicidal shortsightedness of the ruling classes, revolution was the only way left for Russia to achieve greater progress.

But it was not a vacuum or primitive savagery which the Bolshevist dictatorship inherited on seizing power on November 7, 1917. The reserves of material and cultural wealth which it took over were considerable, and it is misleading to think that the Bolshevists were forced by circumstances to begin from scratch. It was the dictatorship's own fault if it turned out that, after a series of insane experiments with total "blitz-socialization" of agriculture, industry and commerce, and everything down to shoe-cobbling and barber shops, it took eleven years and the capitulation of the NEP to bring the country back up to the level of 1917. The civil war itself turned from a brief episode into a long and terrible conflict precisely because those Bolshevik experiments threw the peasant masses right into the arms of the counter-revolutionary generals. (Subsequently, Lenin himself admitted this.)

The first Five Year Plan period which began in 1928-29, as well as the further steps in that direction, boosted industrial construction and output, but the legend of a "miraculous," "unheard-of" industrial growth is contrived Bolshevist propaganda. If we correct the doctored statistics and make the necessary corrections for the inferior quality of the output we obtain in fact a rather modest result. Even Japan, operating as capitalist economy, achieved considerably greater results in a similar time span than "Socialist Russia," and with less hardship on her people.

A thorough survey prepared by Colin Clark, one of the world's foremost statisticians, shows that the assertions about the "extraordinary" economic progress of the Soviet regime are—in the light of facts and figures—pure propaganda. "Economic progress in Russia has been uncertain and slow, and the most recent figures indicated that produc-

tivity (not the output [R.A.]) now is only about the 1900 level." Mr. Clark reports.

Mr. Clark gauges economic progress in terms of a country's output of goods and services *in relation to the labor time expended by its labor force* (real national production per man-hours worked). The figures arrived at by this method show that while the index for the U. S. A. was .21 between 1800-1825, .40 in 1900 and 1.04 by 1941, Russia's productivity index was .15 in 1900, .17 in 1913, and .10 in 1920; in 1927-28 it rose to .16, in 1932-35 it dropped to .12, rose again in 1940 to .18 and dropped once more to .14 in 1947. According to Mr. Clark, the national productivity of Russia is now one-eighth that of the U. S. A., 4 times less than that of Great Britain and two and one-half times less than that of France. Thus, if we were to make a list of countries in terms of economic progress, Russia would belong in one group with Rumania and Hungary, just ahead of India.

Is it any wonder then, given the low productivity and the enormous capital investments in heavy and war industry, that the general standard of living should remain exceedingly low? Is it any wonder in fact, that the rather low standard of living of the Russian worker is considerably lower than in pre-revolutionary Russia?

* * *

IN THE June 1948 issue of Modern Review Dr. Solomon Schwarz, one of the best informed men on social conditions in the USSR, published an extensive study on the standard of living of the Soviet worker. This is the summary of his findings:

During the first 10 years of the Bolshevik revolution, the real wages of the Russian worker were considerably lower than they had been in pre-revolutionary Russia. They remained very low until the NEP, rose somewhat in the years that followed. It was only in 1928 that they reached or even exceeded by a few percent, the pre-revolutionary level. But with the beginning of industrialization, the real wages again began to drop. "From 1928 . . . to 1938 . . . real weekly earnings of wages and salary earners declined about 20 percent in terms of purchasing power. . . . By 1948 real weekly earnings in terms of purchasing power had dropped about 40 percent as against 1938. . . . As compared with 1928, the total decline in real wages in 20 years amounts to about 50 percent." As the 1928 level was approximately the same as that which prevailed before the revolution, it follows that the present standard of

living of the Soviet worker is approximately 50 percent lower than in Tzarist times.

But what about Russian agriculture? Has not Stalin, by means of the "second revolution"—the collectivization of the farms—miraculously modernized the backward century-old agricultural system of "Saint Russia"?

One of the recognized authorities in the field of Russia agriculture is Dr. N. Jasny, who recently published a careful and detailed study on "The Socialized Agriculture in the USSR."*

Despite the collectivization of the farms and the introduction of a huge number of tractors and other farm machinery—all of which naturally reduced the number of employed farm workers—, it is Dr. Jasny's considered opinion that the annual output per each farm worker has only increased by about 20 percent, which is very inadequate. It follows that the general increase in the national agrarian output has been quite small and lags badly behind the growth of the population. In other words, the per capita amount of available food is rather decreasing. Hence, the incredibly low standard of living not only of the industrial workers but of the Kolkhoz peasants as well,—except a very small stratum of privileged persons.

Like many another cynical and "realistic" apologist, Deutscher sees a historical justification for the Stalinist dictatorship, if not in the building of "Communism" at least in the mad tempo of the country's industrialization and in the mechanization of the agriculture—which, in his opinion, no other regime could have carried out. On the basis of the brief statistical generalizations which we have cited above, we refuse to recognize even this very poor *raison d'être* for Stalinism.

Even if one were to view, together with Deutscher, Stalinism and its entire policy as a form of what Marx called "primitive accumulation" Stalin's form of Soviet accumulation would be guilty not only of barbarousness but of inefficiency. Inefficiency is the only possible explanation for the fact that, despite frenzied industrialization and huge capital investments—an adequate diet even of black bread, a pair of boots, a shirt or a cot in an overcrowded room are still unattainable luxuries for tens of millions. Apparently the waste of the Soviet system is far more extravagant than the *faux frais* of capitalism which Marx singled out

* Stanford University, 1949.

as the basic economic cause of the irrationality and viciousness of the capitalist system.

* * *

GENERATIONS of intellectuals in every country were brought up on the passion and indignation of those pages of the first volume of Marx's *Das Kapital* which are devoted to "primitive accumulation of capital." Peasants were being ruined and driven out by sheep, in order for the capitalists to make some profits. Man, said Marx, was being converted into a "mute tool" of production; he was becoming a mere thing, a merchandise to be sacrificed on the altar of "accumulation." But what would Marx have said if anyone had told him that those who would in the future be engaged in the construction of what Ponty calls "the Marxist undertaking," would sacrifice millions of human lives to speed up "accumulation"? What would he have said if anyone had told him that his "disciples" would trample under foot all of the most elementary values of humanity and decency, in order to accelerate the tempo of "primitive accumulation" in a society based upon a totalitarian hierarchy and crying social inequalities?

But even from the point of view of cold blooded Machiavellism—trading liberty and human dignity for the blessings of "accumulation"—the Bolshevist experiment does not appear to be successful, for those much vaunted "blessings" are illusory and have no basis in fact*

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* As far back as 1929-30 it became entirely clear to us that the Russian Bolshevist experiment had been undergoing a "radical change in its character," as Merleau-Ponty puts it. From a revolution whose aim was to defend the interests of the workers and peasants, it changed to a despotism whose object it was to squeeze out of the workers, by means of gross violence, as much surplus value as was possible, and out of the peasants as much unpaid for grain and other produce as was feasible. All this was in the interests of "primitive accumulation." I pointed out this change in the historical function of the Bolshevist dictatorship as far back as 1931 in a pamphlet entitled: "Wandlungen der Bolshevistischen Diktatur," and published in Berlin and Copenhagen. In the history of revolutions it is customary to dlb "Thermidor" such a change of function on the part of a revolutionary regime. In France the ninth day of Themidor was marked by the arrest and execution of Robespierre, who personified the first phase of the Revolution. A new combinatioo of forces came into power—the so-called Thermidorians. In the case of Soviet Russia, the Thermidor was made on installments by Stalin and his associates. Here, too, the destruction of the old leading group took place. But this destruction was not accomplished by a new party. It was done by the leader of this very old guard, who re-shaped the old party to his own image. The party of the revolution was thus transformed into the party of Thermidor, and the leaders of November turned into the leader of Thermidor: Robespierre was transformed into Tallien, Fouché and the First Consul. But in the totalitarian Bolshevist revolution the victory of Thermidor did not signify the end of the Terror, as was the case with the 9th of Thermidor in France. On the contrary, in Russia it marked the beginning of its most horrible period, that of Yezhov.

BUT the inertia of the mind, the wish to find a refuge for the old illusions, is stronger than logic and historical experience. Even when compelled by realistic considerations, and the natural instinct of self-preservation, to concede the reactionary and imperialistic character of today's Communism, as does Julius Braunthal (former editor of the Vienna "Kampf" and the International Socialist Forum in London during the war-years) in the October issue of the Zurich "Rote Revue," he still tries to save and to re-affirm the "historical revolutionary function" of Bolshevism in the field of international politics—namely—in the countries of "traditional despotism."

Julius Braunthal knows what happened in Russia. He writes: . . . "The experience of thirty years of the Communist 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in Russia shows that such a dictatorship inescapably develops into a dictatorship of the party which is in possession of the power, and the dictatorship of the monopolistic party must automatically turn into the terroristic despotism of its executive committee. . . . The experience shows furthermore that a communist dictatorship is well able to destroy the capitalist structure of a bourgeois society, but it destroys at the same time the creative forces which are indispensable for the building of Socialist collectivism."

And Braunthal goes on to say:

"Finally the Russian experience teaches us, that Communist dictatorship menaces the free and independent nations with despotic foreign domination. . . . The process of Communist expansion has been up to now a process of the expansion of the Russian Empire."

"The inevitable result of this development is the Atlantic Pact. The Western European Socialists tried hard to get along with the Soviet Russia. But they failed because Communism rejects any cooperation with democratic Socialism. . . . Thus no other way was left to the Western Socialists but resistance against Russian expansion: resistance with spiritual arms . . . and resistance with instruments of violence if armed violence should try to overrun them."

Braunthal, for a quarter of a century, defended against the Mensheviks and Karl Kautsky, the thesis of the Austrian Socialist leader Otto Bauer that Soviet Russia, despite all her "shortcomings" and "errors," despite her political system of despotism, still remained the backbone of World Socialism. It could be mildly criticized, if necessary, but never combatted.

It has been a long way from the illusions of the 20's to the Tiperary of the Atlantic Pact. I would be only too eager to greet an old friend who, at last, arrived. But I am very much afraid, that Braunthal, who, —as I have reasons to believe,—reflects not only the views of his Austrian friends but also of certain circles of British Socialism,—still leaves a backdoor open for the return of some old illusions.

He states, in the article cited:

"However, it cannot be contested by anybody that in the countries of traditional despotism the Russian dictatorship fullfilled a progressive revolutionary function, because it lifted the working classes up from their depth of social humiliation, eliminated the social unequality and destroyed the monopoly of property."

It would be extremely difficult to define the "countries of traditional despotism." Is Austria on the list of such countries? If not, why is Hungary or Poland? Did Marx consider in his time these two nations to be "traditionally" despotic?

But independently of this difficulty, the whole theory of the "Progressive revolutionary function" which Soviet Russia had or still has to accomplish in the backward countries is a delusion. This theory springs from the hypothesis advanced in the early 1930's by Bauer, concerning two possible roads to Socialism: the road of "benevolent despotisms"—embodied in Russian Bolshevism, and fit for backward and unindustrialized countries, and the democratic way—reserved for the countries of advanced capitalism.

* * *

THIS theory, psychologically born from the urge to find a formula which would permit a peaceful "co-existence" of Communism and democratic Socialism, was under the practical aspect nothing less, than the division of the world of labor—and consequently also of the world at large—into two "spheres." And therefore an anticipation of, and a factor leading to, what happened after Yalta and Potsdam, with all the inescapable consequences, tending to the Third War. Under the moral aspect it was the expression of a peculiar "superiority complex" of our Western comrades, abandoning the Easterners to the mercy of Stalin and sanctioning his right to "educate" us by the means of his "benevolent despotism."

These dangerous and misleading theories must definitely be abandonned if we are not to be submerged in a mire of utter confusion. There

is no "despotic way to Socialism," simply because, as experience teaches, a terroristic dictatorship is organically unable to solve in a progressive way the social and human problems involved in the process of socialist transformation of a society.

Julius Braunthal himself refers to that experience with Russia when he states that "the experience of 30 years Communist domination . . . shows that although the Communist dictatorship is able to demolish the capitalistic structure of the bourgeois society, it destroys at the same time, by annihilating the autonomy of the working people, the creative forces indispensable to the development of a Socialist collectivism." But was not Russia the classical country of "traditional despotism?" If experience shows that Bolshevism has no progressive Socialist function in Russia, why assume that it will have one in Poland or Rumania, or Hungary, or the Baltic states?

The fact is that the totalitarian dictatorship of the Communist party has no progressive function whatsoever. It cannot contribute to the progress of humanity whether in Russia, Germany, Britain, the United States, China or Indonesia. It is neither a regime of democratic or Socialist agrarian reform, nor is it a regime which tears down the "monopoly of property" in order to establish a regime of equality. It is totalitarianism, a system of absolute slavery and total absence of any human, spiritual and social freedom.

In a country occupied by the Red army and then delivered to the small local Communist party,—an agrarian reform is only a short transition to the "kolkhoz, which means complete economic and social enslavement of the peasants. Nationalization of the industry—instead of bringing the workers more influence in the management of the industrial enterprises and a higher standard of living, makes the workers salves of the Communist management. The Communist regime tears down the monopoly of education hitherto held by the moneyed classes, but established instead the monopoly of the new privileged group—the Communist party and the Komsomol.

Bolshevism has long ago ceased to be a factor of social progress. Nay, it became the worst enemy of human advance. Consequently the worst thing which can happen to a country now, after the destruction of Hitlerism, is to become Communist. For a Communist regime means for a people the most complete material, political and spiritual enslavement—and absolute hopelessness.

THE reign of a reactionary monarch, the dictatorship of a military clique, the rule of a de Gaulle, however repulsive by itself, can be only a brief interlude in our epoch; all such regimes are inherently weak and shortlived. In a world ruled by powerful modern capitalist or semi-capitalist democracies, the pressure of world opinion and the politico economic might of the democratic countries will eventually squeeze out of the picture those anti-democratic systems, which have by nature no power of ideological expansion and have no "Big Brother" to protect and bolster them. But the Communist regimes have. They are capable of entrenching themselves in a country by "total" terror, by mobilizing ideological mass support; they become immediately part and parcel of a powerful international ring closely tied to Russia, and only by a rare coincidence of a chain of factors can a Communist dominated country free herself or be freed from the deadly embrace of World Communism. For the situation in an individual Communist country is determined not by the relation of forces and classes within this country, which in that or other moment may be unfavorable to the Communist regime and could bring about its downfall—but by the entirety of Communist forces all over the world, including Soviet Russia, which will buttress the falling regime.

As a rule, a country, once gone Communist, remains Communist, and the specific immanent evolution of Communism, "the totalitarian spiral" reshapes it to the image of Russia. In the words of Goethe, Communism is "die Kraft, die Gutes will und stets das Böse schaft" (a force that wants the good and always produces Evil), a system, in which "Vernunft wird Unsinn, Wohltat — Plage" — Reason becomes Absurdity, Benefit turns into Torment.

THE LAST MONTH

An Episode From Captivity

By LEON BLUM

(This is the story, as I promised to tell it, of our peregrinations during the last month of our captivity. It begins on April 8, 1945, when my wife and I were removed from Buchenwald, and it ends on that fourth day of May when, from the window of a little hotel on the slopes of the Dolomites in the Italian Tyrol, we first beheld the helmets of the American troops.)

I WAS ABLE to keep a journal during these last critical days, and it is upon these daily notes that I will base my narrative. I have them here, under my eyes. They are penciled scrawls, written hastily as fortune permitted, during stopovers or on the hard cot upon which we occasionally rested. There is hardly a line in them which was not written with the feeling that it might be the last. Indeed I may well say, without unduly dramatizing the situation, that the idea of death was our constant companion during this month-long voyage. We did not know when this idea would turn into a reality: it might happen at any moment, at any point along the way, every time that we alighted from a car or crossed a new threshold. This specter was always at our side, and we finally grew accustomed to it.

To tell the truth, we had long before become used to it. I arrived in Buchenwald in the beginning of April, 1943 (I spent two years there, to the day); my wife was able to join me in the middle of June. Never for a single minute did we seriously suppose that we would ever again set foot on French soil. I was in the hands of the Nazis, and in their eyes I was something more than merely a French political leader. I was the embodiment of all they hated most in the world, a democratic socialist, and a Jew. But the self-same reasons which made of me a particularly despised enemy also endowed me with an especial worth as a hostage. For I could be used in barter not only with the French State and its allies, but also with the forces of international socialism and democracy.

Even so, what is the value of any hostage, however precious? Those who hold him try to exchange him for a commodity of equal value, and this commerce necessarily implies a threat, a blackmail on the life of the

hostage. When they say, "we will swap you Mr. X. . . , whom we hold prisoner, for Mr. Y. . . ," this means of course, "if you refuse, we will liquidate Mr. X. . . ." We were perfectly well aware—my wife and I—that the reason our captors kept us alive was to be able to carry out this blackmail in the hour of their defeat. We were convinced that the Allies would not accede to such a proposition, and we fully approved of their attitude in advance. But we knew that such a refusal would bring with it its logical consequences for my wife as well as for myself. For though my wife had joined me of her own free will, her fate was henceforth inexorably tied to mine. Thus, what lent its dramatic character to the voyage which I am about to relate is that it took place in that crucial last hour before the Nazi defeat.

Already the year before in Buchenwald, we had sensed this presence, or rather this sudden proximity, of death. I am thinking of that morning in July when, by order of Himmler himself, the Weimar Gestapo came to take the unfortunate Georges Mandel from the house which we had shared for fifteen months. The week before we had learned of the execution of Philippe Henriot at the hands of a few volunteers of the Resistance. We had immediately foreseen that Darnand and his militiamen would seek for victims to immolate on the altar of Henriot's memory, and we had realized that either Mandel or myself, perhaps both of us, were in line for the part of sacrificial lamb. Poor Georges Mandel went his way alone. We helped him pack his baks and collect his blankets for the airplane journey which awaited him. With him we walked to the gate of the barbed-wire fence which separated us from the outside world. He had not the slightest illusion about what lay in store for him, but even the most attentive observer would have been unable to detect any tremor in his hands, his gait or his voice. We had never seen him more calm, more steady, more lucid. From our window, we watched the departure of the car that was to drive him to the airport, and we felt a morbid foreboding that someday, soon perhaps, we would be called upon to travel the same path.

TERMS SUCH as solitude and confinement fail to describe adequately the existence which we led for two years in that house in Buchenwald. No one ever entered it save the SS guards, and we were never allowed to go out. Or rather, those three or four times when we did go out to visit the dentist, it was at night and by car. We met no one on the road,

no one in the hospital. The twenty-five or thirty SS men who stood guard over us made their rounds without ever seeming to stop. Their sub-machine guns under their arms, their bloodhounds straining on the leash, they moved relentlessly in the little path between the house and the barbed wire, stone-faced and silent as shadows. In fact, our house was less a prison than a dungeon or a funeral vault: in it one felt forever cut off from the world. And this feeling had such a basis in reality that friends of ours in Buchenwald spent over eighteen months there without even knowing of our presence.

The severity of this incarceration also explains a fact which would otherwise seem incredible. I refer to our long-protracted ignorance of the unspeakable horrors that were taking place a few hundred yards away from us. The first clue that we had was the strange odor which we could often smell in the evenings and which tormented us whenever the wind was blowing in the direction of our open windows. It was the smoke of the crematorium. Every day there were many deaths in Buchenwald, but at first we did not know precisely what caused them. We understood it far better after the American bombardment of the camp on August 24, 1944. The central factory as well as the soldiers' quarters and those of the officers had been hit. As our own dwelling stood nearby, we saw the workers come into our sector to make the most urgent repairs. These men were political prisoners, and one had but to see them pass with their pale faces marked by deep lines, their bodies too thin in their striped rags, their feet naked in their rough wooden sandals, in order to apprehend the nature of the torture they were undergoing.

The clumping of their wooden shoes on the road would send us to the window. They walked slowly. Some were hitched like beasts of burden to carts loaded with sand and stone; others marched in single file, carrying on their bending shoulders the trunk of a huge tree, like captives in Egyptian or Assyrian friezes. There were Frenchmen and Belgians among them with whom we managed to exchange a few words. It was in this way that I learned the names of certain of my friends, comrades and colleagues who were being detained in Buchenwald. It was in this way that I garnered a few scraps of information about the nature and duration of the daily work, about the food and the condition of the barracks, about the brutality and cruelty of the guards. Yet even my informants were ignorant of the frenzied savagery to which the Nazis gave free rein in those sectors of the camp where they kept Russian,

Polish and Jewish prisoners. And it was only after the liberation of the camp by the Americans, after the capture of the Nazi records and the examination of the hovel-like barracks, after the testimony of the survivors, that the mysteries of Buchenwald were revealed to us in all their quasi-maniacal horror.

Now, I shall turn back to my notes and begin my narrative. . . . .

ON EASTER Sunday at about 2 p.m., the German prisoner who served as our orderly came to knock on the door of our room. He announced to us the imminent visit of a German officer. A visit? In this little house of Buchenwald on the edge of the camp, near the woods, visits were indeed a rarity. What could be the reason for this one? It was not very difficult to guess. The anxious uncertainty of the preceding week gave way to a sure knowledge. Our fate had been decided, and there was no appeal.

The fact was that the Third American Army had been waiting along the nearby river Weser for nearly a week. Its armored vanguards had already gone beyond Eisenach, and Buchenwald was only 75 kilometers away from Eisenach. For a week we had lived in an atmosphere of feverish expectation. It would take an armored spearhead only a few hours to reach the camp, the greater part of whose garrison had been evacuated since the Russian attack on the Oder. Would not the Americans attempt this liberating *rush?* That noise which we could hear during the day, was it the far-off sound of bombs or the nearer echo of the guns? When we woke up at night from our half-sleep, was it not the metallic clanking of the American tanks which we could hear outside? When would they be here? That very night, in the morning, the next day? And, above all, would they arrive in time, before an order of the Gestapo removed us from our prison and sent us to the rear, far, far from the Allied advance? We knew full well that our lives were at stake. But why had not the order come through already? Perhaps in the confusion of the disaster which was beginning to spread around them, the Gestapo had forgotten us? In that case it was only a matter of days before we were free. Sooner or later, but without a doubt some day, we would see France again, our loved ones and our friends. But if the fatal order did come through, if we were removed to the South, to that mountain retreat where the supreme resistance was to take place, then there could be no doubt of the fate which awaited us. We would

be destroyed in the final collapse. Hitler would perish, but he would perish like an Oriental despot, like Sardanapalus in Delacroix' painting, heaping his companions, his slaves, his hostages helter-skelter on his funeral pyre. . . .

Three o'clock. We can hear approaching steps. There is a knock on the door, and the promised visitor enters. I am stretched out on my bed, nearly paralyzed by an attack of sciatica. My wife rises to meet him.

We don't know this officer. He speaks French with difficulty but understands it well. He informs us that the commander of the camp has sent him to tell us that instructions have been received to evacuate us from Buchenwald without delay. We are to be ready to leave later in the afternoon. We will travel by car, and we can only take with us what little baggage there is room for in the car. . . .

My wife packed hurriedly. She and our orderly Joachim dressed me, as I lay on the bed unable to move. At eight-thirty—contrary to the myth, almost nothing is done on time in Germany—some SS men carried me down the stairs and into the waiting car. It was raining and the night was dark. Each jolt echoed painfully throughout my body, and it was an effort for me not to cry out. The car was a tiny coupe accommodating four persons; it was impossible to stretch out at all. The problem was to seat me in such a way that I would not fall. How this was done I don't remember, but I do know that I somehow remained wedged in my corner for nearly twenty-four hours, unable to move and in terrible pain at every jolt. Really, I had a very bad time of it. I mention it in passing and will not speak of it again.

My wife inquired after our baggage and was told that it had been placed in the bus. The bus? Did this mean that we were part of a convoy? Apparently yes, for after a few minutes our car stopped in a clearing in the woods which was obviously a point of rendezvous. Carrying flashlights, shadowy figures emerged from the forest and moved toward us in the rain. All headlights out, a huge car came out of the gloom, then a second, then a third. We could hear voices calling out names as these human shadows gathered around each car. Then, one by one, they entered the waiting cars and disappeared. During this time, the driver of our car, an SS man of course, had been joined by his colleagues. Maps were brought out and the itinerary was discussed. Though they spoke in whispers, I overheard two words, Jena and

Nuremberg! So I had been right: we were being taken toward the South, to the mountain fortress. But who were the men, women and children who were our companions in the convoy? They, too, were prisoners, most of whom had lain for many months in the caves—I use the word advisedly—of Buchenwald and were coming into the open for the first time that night.

IT WAS eleven p.m. when our caravan began to roll. The commanding SS officer came to sit by the side of our driver, and our car closed the procession. We moved slowly in the night, and paused at each crossing for interminable halts. We passed through Weimar and noticed that it had been half destroyed by bombardment. Whenever a flash of light streaked through the darkness, we could see moving shapes: the exodus had already begun. Alone or in small groups, bent under the weight of their packs and dragging behind them ghostly children, these ghosts made their way to the main road and vanished. Now, we were riding through Jena. The highway to Nuremberg and Munich lay to our right, but we didn't turn off and kept going straight ahead—in an easterly direction. I didn't understand what this meant, and I tried in vain to catch a hint about our destination.

The night was long, and it was not until dawn that I was able to get my bearings. We were in the westernmost tip of Saxony, near the Czechoslovakian frontier. Everything around us, the landscape, the architecture, the villages, the names, suggested the proximity of Bohemia. At about nine p.m., our car suddenly went to the head of the procession and, picking up speed, left it far behind. We were now alone on the road. A signpost told us where we were heading: *Ratisbonne, 200 kms.* I understood now that this traveling eastward was only a detour, and that we were making our way to the south in a path that resembled a huge arc. We entered a small town called Neustadt: we were half way to Ratisbonne already.

But suddenly, we turned off the highway. The car was going up a steep mountain road. A torrent could be heard roaring in a nearby gorge, and at each moment the scenery grew more and more wild. Where were we being taken? As far as I could tell, we were again traveling in the direction of the Czechoslovakian frontier, toward Sudetenland. But what now! Suddenly the countryside became more gentle, more populated. To our left, we could see a huge quarry, a small railroad,

carts and a great many workers cutting up stone. These men were prisoners! We recognized the striped suits and the wooden shoes. Apparently there was a concentration camp somewhere on the side of this desolate mountain, and no doubt we would be hidden there from our would-be liberators. The climb continued, and shortly we found ourselves in front of a row of houses. We passed through the main gate, and the car pulled to a stop in front of the central building. Without a word, the officer alighted from the car and left us alone with the driver.

We remained thus for three hours, anxiously awaiting some sign, some word. Were we going to stay here? Was this to be our prison henceforth? The place had a sinister aspect. As we waited, prisoners on their way back from work were herded by our car by SS men. They looked more haggard and spent, more pitiful still than the inmates of Buchenwald. Everything here had an air of torment, of suffering, of death. We later found out the name of this concentration camp; it was Flossenburg, little known but fully deserving of the same atrocious renown as Buchenwald, Dachau and Auschwitz. During these last weeks, political prisoners died here by the thousands, either in the torture chambers or in the execution pit. The Gestapo was getting rid of them fast, dispatching them in great bunches.

We saw the officer start back towards the car. Was he going to enter or were we going to get out of it? We followed his every movement with some nervousness, but, without a word, he entered the car and took his seat by the driver's side. The car started again, and at the same moment we saw a strange vehicle coming out of a side-street. It was a high-roofed truck, entirely sealed, with metallic sides. It looked something like a prison van without windows. This armored truck took the lead, and we followed it out of Flossenburg. Down the mountain path we went and past the quarry, and soon we found ourselves again in Neustadt. We stopped behind the truck, on the village square. Clearly our only purpose in going to Flossenburg had been to pick up this van and incorporate it in the convoy. Why? What did it contain that was so precious? We found out before long, for several SS men who had been standing guard on the square came over to the van and opened what looked like a door. A number of men got out. We were later to learn the names of these prisoners of the iron cage. They were suspects who had been arrested after the unsuccessful attempt on Hitler's life on

July 20, 1944, suspects whom, for one reason or another, the Gestapo had not yet executed. Among the high-ranking officers in this group were such generals as Falkenhausen, ex-governor general of Belgium, Halder, ex-chief of staff, and Thomas, ex-director of the Economic Services of the Army. There were some civilians with them, notably several lay members of the intimate circle of the Cardinal of Munich. . . . My wife and I exchanged our views in a hushed voice. It did not augur well for us that we were being joined to such severely guarded prisoners. Would it not have been better for us to remain in Flossenburg, in spite of the sinister aspect of the camp?

MEANWHILE THERE arrived on the square the cars and the bus which made up the rest of the convoy. Men and especially women and children alighted from the cars, and everyone stretched under the watchful eyes of the armed SS men. In little groups the prisoners converged on an inn where food was apparently being distributed. It was past 2 p.m., and there seemed no sign of our moving off immediately. We alone remained shut-up in the little car, hungry and forgotten in the general distribution of food. It was only a moment before leaving that we received a slice of black bread and a little *wurst*.

It was a beautiful day, and the town lay serene and undamaged before us. Housewives were gaily chatting on their doorsteps while the children played. Everything seemed so peaceful and gay; one felt so far away from the war. At our side, on the pavement, a little girl, no more than seven or eight years old, was skipping rope with the agile grace of a dancer and the innate elegance of a little princess. The convoy started out again, and once more we were in the lead and traveling fast. The air was brisk, the light agreeable and gentle. We were now following the road down into a winding valley, and both the trees and the fields around us were of a delicate and subtle hue of green. The entire landscape seemed a perfect composition of lines and colors. On a bluff on the other side of the river, there stood a romantic little town, comfortably nestled in the embrace of its ancient walls. My wife whispered to me, "it's really beautiful." The officer overheard her, turned around and exclaimed suddenly, "it will be more beautiful when the war is over. . . ."

Night was falling when we finally reached Ratisbonne. This was the focal point for a number of highways, some leading to Munich and

the Tyrol, others towards Salzburg and the Alps. The city had been seriously hit by American bombardments, and there was little arrogance or triumphant scorn in the eyes of those we saw on the streets. Hunger and fear had already left their traces on these faces, and there was an air of poverty and of seediness about the town. Our officer questioned the passersby. *"Polizeidirection?"* he asked. It was an euphemism for Gestapo.

The Gestapo had its headquarters in a large edifice of ancient design which overlooked a shadowy and deserted square. As usual, the officer went inside and we waited. But as his absence continued, the driver, no doubt finding time heavy on his hands, turned around and engaged us in conversation. I understood most of what he said, and when I didn't quite, I had no trouble guessing at his meaning. Indeed, I even succeeded in answering him, though not without effort. He said that he knew us quite well, having driven us to the Buchenwald Hospital several times. I asked him whether our journey was over, for after twenty-four hours of immobility I was at the end of my strength.

"We will go no further," he answered.

"Do you mean that we are going to stay in Ratisbonne?"

"Not in Ratisbonne proper. But I think that a place to stay has been prepared for you in the neighborhood."

"How about the other prisoners, those in the van and the cars? Will they stay here?"

"Ah, I don't know about that. The Captain is settling all that with the Gestapo."

The driver now went outside to stretch his legs, and we were left completely alone. From time to time, in the distance, we could see some skinny adolescent carrying stolen wood in between the houses in ruin. The driver was standing at the other end of the square. Suddenly my wife turned to me:

"How far are we from the nearest American lines?"

"Patton must be somewhere between Wurzburg and Nuremberg. Say 120 or 150 kilometers away."

"Well then, listen. There are maps in this compartment, and there is enough gas in the tank. I am going to take the wheel, and we will start the car. Before the driver can give the alarm, we will be far away."

"You can't be serious! You know that I speak German miserably. We have no identification papers. As soon as we reach the zone of

combat, we will be stopped every twenty feet by sentries. And even supposing that we should reach the front lines, how would we cross them?"

My wife answered in a grave tone of voice and with that prophetic accent which she had in moments of real danger:

"You object on the grounds that my suggestion is not practical. Indeed I grant you that our chances of making it are slight. But I assure you that if we remain here, they are nil. If we stay, we are lost."

I felt bitterly torn between the counsel of common sense and the advice of this exalted voice which had so often foretold the future to me. But this interior debate was soon at an end, for the officer came out of the Gestapo building and headed toward us.

He was not alone: a shady character walked at his side. In Buchenwald we had learned to recognize this sort of plain-clothes policeman. The men who had come for Georges Mandel the year before had something of this fellow's "pussy-footing" sidle—I can think of no better term than this slang expression. The officer took his seat beside the driver, and the other man, who was doubtless to be our guide, took his post on the running board.

[Léon Blum and his wife were taken to the local prison and placed in a cell. They were told that this was but a stopover and that they would soon be taken elsewhere. The end, apparently, was not yet.]

I STRETCHED out fully dressed, and my weariness was such that, notwithstanding my usual insomnia, I readily fell asleep on the dirty straw matting which had been provided for me.

With the coming of morning, the silent prison filled with the sound of steps and voices. There were people walking and talking on the other side of the door. Suddenly the door opened, and I saw that the corridor was indeed full of people. A small man with white hair and a smooth face bowed and introduced himself ceremoniously:

"You probably know my name. I am Fritz Thyssen. Doubtless you recall that I sought refuge in France before the war. It was your government which handed me over to the Nazis, over four years ago."

"My government? No, sir, not mine."

"Well, then, the French government."

"It was not the French government either."

It is true that, at the time, I had heard of Mr. Thyssen's case. It was similar to that of my best German Social-Democratic comrades, such as Breitscheid and Hilferding. They too had sought refuge on the soil of France—for centuries the sacred haven of the persecuted and the exiled. They too had been handed over to the Nazis by the government of Vichy, *not a French government,* in obedience to the most shameful clause of the armistice.

While Mr. Thyssen was chatting with us, the other prisoners in the corridor introduced themselves in turn. It was they who had been removed from the caves of Buchenwald, they whom we had seen alight from the cars in Neustadt. Here were all the surviving members of the families of Stauffenberg—the officer who planted the bomb at Hitler's feet that July 20th—and of Gœrdeler, burgmeister of Leipzig, who was slated to become Chancellor if the attempt had succeeded. Here, too, was the daughter of Von Hasselt, formerly German ambassador to Rome, whose father and children the Gestapo had either shot or hanged. Among the prisoners there were also high Hungarian officials who had been arrested in Budapest after the Hungarian attempt to negotiate a private armistice with the Soviet Union.

This interlude lasted only a few moments, for the guards soon locked the heavy iron door again. An hour later we all met again in the caves of the prison, for an air-raid was on, and we could hear the sound of four-motored American bombers as they passed overhead. I still could not walk, and the guards carried me to a small cot in a secluded corner. But I could hear the voices of the other prisoners, as well as the blaring of the loud-speakers which gave a running account of the changing *luftlage,* the air picture. The large bombers of the West were flying over Ratisbonne. Now they were going up the romantic valley through which we had passed the day before; and now they were over Neustadt. I remembered the peaceful little town, seemingly so far from the war, and I visualized it reeling under the shock of two ton bombs. I remembered the children playing in the street, the little girl who danced so gracefully on the pavement. But I also remembered the little tots that were torn from the arms of their parents when these were placed in sealed trains and *shipped* to concentration camps. . . . Might they be damned whose cruelty had unleashed this plague of hatred on the world. . . .

The all-clear sounded. Two prisoners carried me back to our cell,

and one of them whispered to me in French that it had been his idea to volunteer for the job. "I recognized you," he said. "I am Czech, and I have often seen your photograph in our newspapers. . . ."

We spent the afternoon in our cell at a heart-rending task. My wife had noticed that, beneath the fresh coat of paint on the walls, scribbled inscriptions were still visible. They were made with the point of a nail or a knife. We deciphered them and recorded them in a notebook. So many men and women had preceded us here! Generally, it was before they left for the torture chamber or the firing squad that they engraved this last and supreme testimonial of their existence.

Toward seven p.m., we were told to get ready. Two prisoners, the same as before, carried me down the steps and gently helped me into the car. The rest of the convoy had left half an hour before, and our own departure took place in an isolated yard of the prison, with the usual mysterious discretion. In a menacing tone of voice, the officer repeated the Gestapo's instructions to the driver:

"No one must know whom we have in the back seat. If anyone asks, we are to answer that it is the Gauleiter and his wife. . . ."

IT WAS dawn when the convoy stopped again, this time on the outer edge of a large village. Its name was Schoenberg, and we remained there from May 5 to May 16. The German generals and the Hungarians were quartered in a hospital; the families of Thyssen, Stauffenberg, Gœrdeler, and the other Germans, in a school. But in order to maintain an atmosphere of mystery and isolation around us, we were lodged in the private apartment of the Nazi commander of the district. We were not permitted to leave it even once during these twelve long days. As the apartment was situated above the school, we could see our fellow captives downstairs shaking the dust out of their shabby clothes, and basking in the sun. Sometimes one of the women would elude the guards and hurriedly climb up to our floor to borrow a little concentrated milk, some sugar or a French book. The Nazi's wife closed her eyes to this. Her only son had been killed in Russia; she could see the inevitability of the Allied victory. And I really believe that in this little town lost in the mountains, where the tradition of Bavarian patriotism had survived unshaken, there was more fear of the SS men than of either the Americans or the Russians. But whether out of selfish calculation or out of simple humanity, our guard put little enthusiasm in her job, and

I do not think that it was entirely without her knowledge that my wife, taking advantage of the frequent absences of the Nazi commander, was able to slip into his room and turn on the radio. It was in a broadcast from London that we learned of the sudden death of President Roosevelt.

As I write, I can still vividly recall every detail of this moment, and I still feel, as I did then, a profound sadness at the passing of this great man. Roosevelt was dead! I had so much hoped to be able to meet him some day, if by some miracle I survived the war. And now, that was forever impossible. I knew, through my friend William Bullitt, that President Roosevelt had always taken a keen interest in the work of social reconstruction that I had undertaken in his example and in vastly different circumstances from his during my short-lived ministry. I recalled that he had always manifested a personal affection for me, though he knew me only through common friends. In March, 1939, I had decided to spend a few weeks in the United States, and the real purpose of this voyage was to meet him personally and to have a chance to speak with him. When he learned of my plan, he encouraged it and invited me to be his guest at the White House, in a personal note which the Germans stole from my house along with my other papers. All these memories now flocked bitterly back to my mind, and thus I felt that I could mourn, if not a friend, at least a friendship. . . .

Schoenberg will always remain in our memory as the place where we learned of the death of President Roosevelt. We left it as suddenly as we had Buchenwald and Ratisbonne. On the afternoon of May 16, an SS second lieutenant, as elegant and formal as an officer of the old army, came to tell us to be ready by evening. For several days we had been living in the same state of anxious waiting as in Buchenwald. The Americans were now in Bayreuth and Nuremberg. The Russians had captured Vienna, driven beyond Saint-Polten, and were threatening Linz. Where could our guards take us now? Only to the south, since only that path was still open. Toward the south, that is to say, in the direction of that terrible mountain fortress. The Nazi commander had said to my wife, "I think that you will be taken to Innsbruck. . . ." And another prisoner, Mrs. de Hammerstein, had heard that we were going to Dachau, near Munich! Innsbruck, in the heart of the Tyrol! Dachau, whose name, with that of Auschwitz, recalled the most horrible rumors!

Towards eight in the evening, we left Schoenberg in the same little car, with the same driver and officer. After a time, it became evident that we were headed in the direction of Munich. We drove on for hours, but as the dawn appeared the car pulled to a stop. We found ourselves, along with the rest of the convoy, in front of an ornate, monumental gateway: it was the main gate of Dachau!

At nine o'clock in the morning, the convoy made its way into the concentration camp, but our car remained in a side-path, and we were forbidden to step out. SS men stood all around us, herding a long line of prisoners into the camp. One such prisoner recognized me and tried to shake hands with me through the car window; the guards rushed at him and beat him. I later learned that he had been punished with two days of imprisonment in one of those special cells where a man must remain in a standing position. Finally, at 1 p.m., we were taken from the car and led to a high-walled building which was obviously a prison. The door of the cell closed heavily behind us. A few long moments went by. Then we heard someone unbolt the door, and it opened, letting in a man whose appearance was somehow familiar. I seemed to recall having seen before that tall body, that reddish hair, that angular yet flexible gait. The man came closer. "Don't you recognize me?" he said. I couldn't. "No, I am afraid I don't." "Come now," he insisted, "I am Dr. Schacht!"

I HADN'T seen him for nine years. In the Summer of 1936, when I was Prime Minister and he was head of the Reichsbank and of the German Treasury, he had paid me a visit in Paris. He had tried to interest me in some negotiations whose contents I shall perhaps some day set down. I looked now at the fallen official:

"How long have you been a prisoner?" I asked.

"Since that famous July 20th."

"Do you remember when we said goodbye at the Hotel Matignon, nine years ago?" I continued. "If someone had told us then that we would meet again as fellow prisoners in Dachau, which one of us would have been the more surprised?"

Dr. Schacht smiled, baring his strong white teeth. He explained that he had broken the rules in coming to welcome us, and he bid us goodbye. He had not been gone for more than a few minutes, when the door opened again and a new visitor entered. "We have never met," he

said, "but permit me to introduce myself. I am Dr. Schuschnigg. . . ." It is true that we had never met, but we knew one another well. He had in the past been the ruthless enemy of my Austrian socialist comrades, and, as for me, I had unceasingly and mercilessly attacked his policies. While I was heading the French government and he, the Chancellery of Austria, I had tried in vain to make him understand the real plans of Mussolini, in whom he insisted on placing his confidence. Affectionately, I recalled these memories to him.

"It hardly matters now," he answered. "History will judge which one of us was right. We both worked for what we considered the best interests of our country. Both of us wanted peace, and all we have now are the same enemies." In broad strokes, he told me the story of his incarcerations. He had first been jailed in the Gestapo building in Vienna, then near Berlin in Sachsenhausen, then in Flossenburg. From there he had been sent to Dachau. "While in Flossenburg," he added, "I could hear the sound of shooting every afternoon. The Gestapo was methodically liquidating all political prisoners." He seemed very much master of himself, perfectly lucid and calm, but he could visibly feel the shadow of death hovering over him.

Once settled in the prison, our immediate neighbors were Dr. Schacht, Dr. Schuschnigg, his wife whom he had married in jail and his four-year-old daughter who had never lived elsewhere. There was also the Thyssen family, and one other couple who had formerly been kept in the caves of Buchenwald. The man was a German diplomat, his wife, Spanish born. With us also were the three German generals and a young Russian flier, Vassili Kontouline, the nephew of Commissar Molotov.

One evening Schuschnigg again came to our cell, with a thousand precautions. He asked us to join him in his, where some of his friends were waiting to meet us. These were none other than Mr. de Kallay, former Prime Minister of Hungary, and the sons of Regent Horthy and of Badoglio. And there were many other nationalities represented in this veritable Tower of Babel.

Our section of the prison served as quarters to political prisoners, and our cell doors were rarely locked. We were thus relatively free to come and go between the cells and into the yard. It was in this yard, every afternoon, that there took place a scene that was not without humor. After hearing the broadcast of the German military com-

munique—the hour of these broadcasts was variable, and they were finally done away with altogether—the experts would gather around a long table which was covered with campaign maps. The three generals and Colonel de Bonin, ex-chief of operations at German headquarters, were in charge, and they would record on their maps every detail of the Allied advance. The clusters of arrows which indicated the various armies, grew closer and closer to one another as the days passed. While the Schuschnigg family and we took our walk a little distance away, the officers, Schacht and Thyssen would analyze the day's news and make military prognostications. These enemy generals who had commanded armies were now following the progress of the war from our side of the fence. The Allied positions were the ones which they so assiduously charted on their maps, and it was the Allied victory for which they prayed so fervently. For though it would not bring them freedom, as it would to us, it would at least vouchsafe them their lives.

SUDDENLY AN extraordinary rumor spread through Dachau. Trucks of the International Red Cross had been seen entering the camp. According to a last minute agreement concluded between the Allies and the Germans, the camps were to be evacuated by the SS, and the Red Cross would take over until the liberating forces arrived. The SS men themselves confirmed this rumor to us, and for many long hours we were the dupes of this false hope. But we were mistaken. It was not the SS men who were being evacuated, it was the prisoners. The Gestapo had ordered that they be removed before the arrival of the American troops. A convoy made up of the generals and Molotov's nephew left first. We followed on the night of the 26th.

The scene of the evacuation of Dachau is the most horrible of any that I must here record. How many tens of thousands of prisoners were held in the camp, I don't know. There may have been fifty—perhaps one hundred—thousand. The Gestapo did not and could not know where it would take this human herd. For what region of Germany, Austria or Czechoslovakia was still safe at this stage of the Allied advance? What camp could the long columns of prisoners possibly reach ahead of the American or Russian tanks? The Gestapo did not and could not know how these poor people were to be fed on the way. No matter, the order was formal. The servile herd would be driven along

the roads by blows and by the whip. Those who were too weak to walk, those who faltered, would be shot down on the spot.

At nightfall, fifteen of us were taken from our cells and led to one of the squares where the other prisoners had been gathered, where they now stood, silent and somber as the moving sea. The square was filled to overflowing. There were many women and children alongside the men, and all had stood waiting since noon, under the sun and without food. The SS men cut a path for us through all this humanity, all these shaved heads, these ravaged faces, these spent bodies which now moved a little to let us pass. We were with them. We were part of them. Our march was no longer taking place in the margin of life, the margin of death. It was now a march in common. "I feel," said my wife, "as if we had suddenly been brought back to earth."

Suddenly, a ripple spread through this human sea. Some prisoners had recognized Schuschnigg, had recognized me. Our names were spoken, called out and passed along. And as we advanced, each of us in turn spoke the name of our country as if it were our own: France, Austria, Russia. . . . And the echo of these names pronounced by other lips came back to us like a ritual chant. "A man's heart must either harden or break. . . ." I could feel that mine was going to break. It filled me entirely. It was like a huge bell ringing wildly in all these breasts as in mine. Churchill had said it a few days before in the House of Commons: it was thus that the bells would peal in the hour of victory!

In this fashion we reached the main gate of the camp, and we were led to a nearby group of cars. But we didn't actually leave until midnight, and even then we were forced to stop at the first crossing to make way for a column of prisoners that was being led out of the camp. They walked in sections of one hundred, as they did on their way to work, but there was an unusually high percentage of women among them, some carrying children in their arms. There were no trucks with them for either food or baggage. The column advanced rapidly, at an almost military pace, and disappeared into the night. The evacuation of the camp must have been going on for a great many hours, for, ten miles from the gate, our car had not yet reached the beginning of this interminable procession. As the distance from the camp grew greater, the speed of the march declined and the shouts of the SS guards became more savage. Perhaps some women and children had already fainted from exhaustion.

I don't know. We drove rapidly and without headlights, and I want to speak only of that which I saw. At any rate, this was only the beginning of their terrible calvary. A few days later, the Seventh American Army found its path littered with thousands of corpses.

Towards dawn we arrived in Rosenheim, on the river Inn. From this point, we could either go to Salzburg or to Innsbruck. We headed for the latter and arrived there at ten in the morning.

WE WERE taken to a camp on the outskirts of the city. We had no sooner alighted from our cars than a great many men came out of the barracks and hurried toward us. There were a hundred prisoners here, come from every camp in Germany. Finally, for the first time since the beginning of our exodus, we met fellow Frenchmen. We introduced one another. Here was the bishop of Clermond-Ferrand, Mgr. Piquet, whom we grew to know as a friendly and generous companion, and here, Prince Xavier of Bourbon-Parma, whose sister had been Empress of Austria, whose brother had married an Italian princess, and whose complete lack of pretentiousness as well as whose kindness we were to learn to love. Here was Joos, ex-deputy to the Reichstag; here Mottet, Swiss by birth but French at heart and by choice. Like Xavier of Bourbon, he had been captured fighting against the Gestapo and the Militia. Here was the young Raymond Van M., French captain in the RAF—the prototype of the adventure story fighting Frenchman, brave to the point of folly, lighthearted, gallant, charming. Among us there were also some RAF officers, most of whom had been caught behind the German lines with a short-wave transmitter in their pack. One of them was Prime Minister Churchill's namesake and cousin. Add to this list a number of Greek generals; add General Garibaldi, leader of the Partisans of Northern Italy, and his right-hand man, Colonel Ferrero. . . . Add Schmitz, the ex-mayor of Vienna and a friend of Schuschnigg, as well as a number of Kallay's colleagues: Lithuanian and Slovak officials and the Dutch Mr. Van Dyck, ex-Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Besides, there were Italians, Danes, Russians and a great many Germans, notably Prince Frederic of Prussia, and the Prince of Hessia whose wife—the daughter of the King of Italy—had died in Buchenwald. Finally, there was Pastor Niemoeller, the most important figure of the German Evangelical Church, who had been a prisoner of the Gestapo since 1936.

Here we were, about a hundred and fifty people from all nations and walks of life. After filtering and re-filtering its prisoners, the Gestapo had assembled here a final residue of the most detested enemies of the Reich, of the vassals most seriously suspected of treachery. At long last, they had us all together, in one spot. They clearly did not mean to let us go.

As the sun was setting, we left the camp of Innsbruck in one huge convoy. We drove through the city and took the Brenner Pass road. There was an interminable halt at the Italian frontier, and we alighted from the cars to chat and speculate about our destination. "Merano," someone suggested. "No," insisted Schacht, "we are going somewhere in the Dolomites, probably near Toblach." He was right. Near Brixen, we took the beautiful scenic road up the mountain: the Dolomites stood on our right. The Tyrolean guide, who had joined the convoy at the Pass, told us that we were being taken to a resort hotel generally used for winter sports.

We continued going up the road, but suddenly we turned off onto a mountain trail. Toward four a.m., we pulled to a stop in front of an attractive hotel, but all was dark and we were apparently not expected. The SS escorts started to shout, and other angry voices soon answered from the house. Apparently, the hotel which had been destined for us had been taken over by SS troops belonging to the Army of Italy, and they categorically refused to move out now. We went back down the road and stopped a few hundred yards from a somber little village.

The leaders of the convoy no longer had any idea where to take us, and they went to request new instructions by telephone. As for us, we remained in our cars, on the road. We waited thus a whole day, half dead of fatigue, cold and hunger. The SS leaders had been unable to contact the Gestapo, and their confusion and bewilderment were complete. Like sailors shipwrecked on an island, we were lost on the side of this mountain. It was then that Pastor Niemoeller took over command. On foot, he went to the village, gathered food and requisitioned rooms. Everyone obeyed him at once, including the SS men. By midnight, the cars were parked in Niederdorf, we'd all had dinner, and we were in bed.

We had arrived in Niederdorf on the 28th, a Saturday. We left it on the following Tuesday. What took place in the meanwhile is what probably saved our lives.

IT IS impossbile to have any doubts as to what the Gestapo planned to do with us, or as to the instructions which had been given our fanatical guards. Indeed, I recall one of them saying to another, "we certainly go to great pains to guard these prisoners! Why? Have we run out of grenades?" Let me add that the commander of our convoy was the notorious Captain Stieler, head of the Dachau Gestapo, and he was seconded by another officer whose reputation was as sinister as his.

Yet by some miracle—or was it really a concatenation of miracles—these unmistakable and formal orders were not carried out. Why? I shall set down those reasons which I knew or suspected, but there were probably others which I did not even guess. The first and most important of these, of course, was that the war did not follow the timetable which the Nazis had foreseen. The rapidity of the American advance, cutting through central Germany to Czechoslovakia and Austria, made it impossible for the German armies of the North and East to make their way to the Tyrolean fortress area. It was part of the Nazi master-plan for the Army of Italy, Kesserling's old group, to prolong its resistance indefinitely, in order to protect the retreat toward the Southern mountain ranges. But, instead, what happened was that this army was the first to collapse—and to capitulate! As the Americans were already threatening Innsbruck and the Brenner Pass, the Nazi retreat had to take place by way of the road which crosses Niederdorf on the way to Carinthia. Thus, as early as Saturday evening while we were still waiting outside Niederdorf with the convoy, we saw three trucks full of German and Italian troops go by at full speed. As the trucks passed by us, the men threw their rifles away and shouted at the top of their voices *"Krieg Fertig! Hurrah! Hurrah!"* Our SS escort had seen the trucks and heard the shouts as well as we. With us, they had seen all through the night and the following morning the endless procession of retreating tanks, guns, ambulances, soldiers. The defeat was engulfing everyone. We were caught in the eddy of the rout, and not even the SS men were able to resist it.

Another reason for our survival was that we were now in the sector of the Army of Italy, and that fate had decreed that its current commander should be an intimate friend of one of the captive German generals in our convoy. How the two friends were able to arrange a telephone conversation, I shall never know, but such a conversation apparently took place. The results of it were soon manifest.

On the following day, a Monday, a *coup de théatre* took place. A company of the Wehrmacht entered Niederdorf, *disarmed the SS escort,* and replaced them as our guards. Von Alvensleben, the commander of the company, came into our room, as rigid and formal as an officer of the old Imperial Guard, and introduced himself. Then he bowed his head slightly and announced, "You are henceforth under the protection of the military honor of the Wehrmacht."

On Tuesday evening, we were taken in Wehrmacht trucks up a difficult mountain path and through heavy snow to the Hotel of Pragserwilsee. The view was magnificent: a pure, dark lake spread at our feet, and, on the other side, the horizon was edged with woods. At one point, a majestic peak of the Dolomites cut through it and rose vertically above us. But the cold was intense, for the hotel was bathed in a fine fog of snow, and all efforts to start the heating plant had gone for naught.

We were no longer prisoners, but we were not yet free. The first sure sign of our impending liberation came on Thursday morning, when a French officer, Captain Lussac, made a totally unexpected entrance into the hotel. While on a mission to the Italian Partisans, he had learned of our whereabouts and had crossed the mountain at Cortina d'Ampezzo in order to see us. I shall not attempt to render into words the emotion and happiness which we felt at the very sight of his uniform.

But it was only the next morning at dawn that freedom showed her full face. We had spent a feverish and uneasy night, and we woke up at the first rays of morning. My wife arose, went to the window and shouted, "Come, come quickly!" I rushed to her side and looked out. Trucks were pulling to a stop in front of the hotel, and soldiers were alighting from them. Some were wearing the red shirt and loose tie of the Garibaldian Partisans. As for the others, we saw only one part of them at first: their helmets . . . their American helmets. . . .

(This abridgment of Léon Blum's *Le Dernier Mois* [Editions Diderot, Paris, 1946] appears by courtesy of the author. The translation is by Pierre Garai.)

IDEOLOGY AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

What Is the Role of Scientific Truth?

By PAUL KECSKEMETI

I.

"COMMON SENSE"—the words contain, in a nutshell, a theory of man. "Sense," that is, rational thinking, is "common" to all human beings; and it is "common sense," that is, reasonable, always to act on this assumption. Human beings may differ in particulars, and some, blinded by passion or morbidity, may stray from "common sense"; but they cannot differ as to fundamentals. All men agree on what is reasonable; and the reasonable is that on which all men agree.

The 18th century marked the high tide of faith in "common sense" so understood. The rationalists of that century did realize, of course, that mankind, by and large, failed to think or act rationally; but they maintained that all men possessed at least the *faculty* of thinking in accordance with the precepts of reason. All that was needed was to turn this potentiality into an actuality (by removing obstacles and spreading "enlightenment"). The task, though difficult, appeared feasible; nothing in the nature of man was seen as excluding agreement on a common stock of reasonable ideas.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, however, this faith in the fundamental rationality of human thinking was powerfully challenged from various sides. I do not want to discuss here out-and-out irrationalist or anti-rationalist doctrines, such as those upon which the modern cults of power or "blood" were based. What I am here concerned with are modern scientific and philosophical theories which deny, not only the actuality, but also the possibility of a universal consensus based upon a common stock of fundamentally "rational" ideas; a denial which need in no way reflect any rejection of "rationalism" on the part of the theorists themselves.

An example of the kind of theory I have in mind is Karl Mannheim's "sociology of knowledge," an extension of Marxian concepts of the dependence of "thought" on "reality, " and of the "class" structure of consciousness. Mannheim, who enriched these basic ideas with many original insights, and came to modify them in important respects, held that all human thought is "existentially determined." This means that men cannot help thinking along different lines even on fundamentals—and particularly on fundamentals—according to what real forces impinge upon their existence. This being so, Mannheim argued, it is futile even to ask what line of thought is valid *in se;* the very concepts of validity, or reality, of truth itself will be different among groups occupying different *loci* in the stream of the historical process. Nobody can transcend his particular *locus* in choosing an interpretation of what reality is fundamentally. At most, one can achieve insight into his own dependence on social and historical forces in this respect.

Another argument against the assumption of a stock of rationality common to all mankind was furnished by the anthropologists. Thus, Levy-Bruhl advanced the theory of the "pre-logical" structure of "primitive mentality": according to this theory, the thinking of primitive people disregards such supposedly universal principles as those of contradiction and identity. This, of course, precludes not only agreement but even any real communication between Europeans and primitives. Levy-Bruhl's view was later challenged as greatly exaggerated; but the concept of "culture," which dominates present-day anthropology, also implies the existence of quite separate and distinct systems of thought and valuation in various societies. According to this conception, individuals can pass from one culture into another and different cultures may mutually influence each other; but those who live within a culture cannot transcend it at will, and nobody can criticize the conceptual system of a given culture from a wholly neutral, universally "rational" standpoint.

* * *

BOTH OF these theories inevitably lead to relativistic conclusions And after seeing the evidence concerning the great diversity of human beliefs and valuations, one will naturally hesitate to reject out of hand sociological or cultural relativism. For if one seriously maintains that he believes in absolute truth or value, he must (so it seems) point to actual examples of these absolutes. He then cannot help assert-

ing, rather sheepishly, that what he thinks to be the case is *really* so—a rather ridiculous position, especially in so far as values are concerned. As regards scientific truth, however, it is the relativist who is in a somewhat difficult position. For scientific evidence, after all, is scientific evidence, and must be accepted as such (decidedly *not* on the same footing with Zuni myths). The scientist can, in a way, make the best of two worlds. He can disclaim absolutism—since what the scientist, as scientist, says is not meant as *absolute* truth: it is subject to revision on the strength of new evidence or new, and better, explanatory hypotheses. But at the same time, the scientist can also escape relativism: science is not only a set of beliefs comparable to codes or mythologies; it also *works,* much in the same way as Western technology works. Even people in other cultures cannot deny the "science" character of Western science, any more than they can deny that Western automobiles run.

But can science pay relativism its due at so little cost? It is easy to see that the "relativity" of scientific knowledge, which scientists acknowledge, is not the same thing as is meant by either sociological or cultural relativism. If a scientific proposition is modified because of the discovery of new evidence, this is due, not to the adoption of an essentially new approach, but to the repeated application of the *same* methods and the *same* rules of evidence. Thus, the methods, the concepts of scientific objectivity and of validation, remain unchanged and are not acknowledged to be relative. But Mannheim's point was precisely that the very foundations of the scientific outlook, such as concepts of valid knowledge and genuine evidence, are relative. People whose historico-sociological situation is different will necessarily have different ideas about the fundamental nature of the scienctific approach. This is why the theory is called sociology of *knowledge*: the point being that different objective social situations induce different types of knowledge, different epistemologies.

Thus, sociological relativity, according to Mannheim, affects not only such things as value judgments, aspirations, and political goals; it goes to the very roots of *theoretical* thinking as well, and we cannot hope to solve the problem of the relativity of *values* before we have solved that of the relativity of *knowledge.*

I shall not go into the details of the solution offered by Mannheim. Its gist is that man, after all, is not cut off from Truth because the constant flux, the dynamism of history, the inevitable change of points

of view and standards of knowledge *is* Truth itself. Hence, we can accept the fact that different types of knowledge succeed one another in history, and may even co-exist in times of crisis and turmoil like ours, and yet not despair of the possibility of genuine knowledge. For, although the various types of knowledge are irreconcilably antagonistic, each has its "truth"—just the truth which becomes visible from one social vantage point. Some of these "perspectives" are more fruitful, more vital, than others, but none is absolutely valid, and none is absolutely false. The theory of "one truth" is an illusion natural to epochs in which social integration is complete; where there are no groups with antagonistic interests and experiences, there can be no epistemological differences either. But in a period in which a sharp conflict exists among classes, this will also be reflected by a conflict among antagonistic, and yet somehow complementary, types and concepts of science.

* * *

MANNHEIM DISTINGUISHED in particular two types of science. One was exemplified by natural science, which applied quantitative methods and dealt with objects recurring with identical properties; the other was represented mainly by cultural history, which treated of absolutely unique objects and hence could not formulate any "general laws" at all. Instead of producing "laws," deductive-inductive theoretical systems, this cultural science had the task of somehow divining the intelligible meaning of a unique historical process.

If one is ready to agree that a genuine science of the "unique" and "intelligible" is possible (and, of course, not everybody will), one might still object to Mannheim's analysis that this dichotomy of methods does not, in fact, involve any epistemological relativity. For objects of a very different nature naturally require different methods in dealing with them, and no contradiction is possible between the two concepts of science if each remains in its own domain and refrains from referring to the objects examined by the other. But Mannheim maintained that the rivalry and contradiction between the two types of science was genuine, because both aspired to analyze man and society. A choice had to be made between the "natural-science" type "static" sociology and the historically oriented, "dynamic" one. Due to the relativity of scientific thinking, the choice was not free; one had to choose according to the outlook imposed by his social (class) background. Mannheim himself voted for the "dynamic" type which, he thought, corresponded

to a non-bourgeois—either aristocratic and conservative, or revolutionary and proletarian—background; he felt that the most valuable insights would be lost if this non-bourgeois perspective was not brought to bear on the problems of sociology. Not that the other perspective was "false"; but it was, at the present moment, the less vital and productive one.

We see that Mannheim's theory leads to the assumption of a real clash between antagonistic types of sciences, roughly corresponding to antagonistic class positions. Does this theory characterize correctly the situation in Western science?

II.

THAT a crisis situation exists in Western science, especially in the cultural sciences, but to a lesser extent also in the mathematical and natural sciences, is undeniable. The crisis is by no means an acute one in every phase of scientific pursuits. Research is going on, on the whole, smoothly; and a consensus is reached on the everyday level without great difficulty. Debates tend to become inconclusive only when we go into the more fundamental, philosophical aspects of the subject matter of the various sciences. One might suggest that this philosophical "crisis" is, though insurmountable, a healthy thing; why should we postulate philosophical uniformity as an ideally healthy condition? Precisely the fact that science is a "going concern," in spite of philosophical quandaries, shows that the evil is not, after all, mortal. On the contrary, constant tension is a sign of health and life. And so it may be. Nevertheless, I do not think that we can shrug off our philosophical "crisis" in this fashion. Without postulating unanimity on philosophical fundamentals, we can still say that something necessary is lacking in our intellectual outlook—not, to be sure, a final, dogmatic solution to all fundamental problems, but a grasp of the "meaning of it all," a feeling of being at home in our world, a sense of harmony with the great stream of life which surrounds us. If this feeling of being "at home" in the world existed, it still could not be formulated once and for all, in a final and valid philosophy. There would still be inconclusive debates. But they would have a different aspect. We should feel that we are struggling with the angel, and not that we are shut out of a spiritual home.

Thus, I think the crisis in Western science, though not acute in all

aspects, is a real one, and reflects a crisis in the entire body of our civilization. But it does not seem to me that the crisis primarily consists in different classes being encased in mutually antagonistic "perspectives," each leading to a radically different conception of scientific truth and method. I would suggest, rather, that class division on the whole has little effect upon the way in which scientific truth criteria are defined. Not that the members of all classes have the "same" conception of scientific truth. This is impossible, not because different class backgrounds demand different definitions of truth, but because science is too specialized to permit everyone to understand its concepts and methods, so to speak, "from within." What I mean is simply that we cannot observe a major differentiation along class lines, either in the lay public's conceptions of what one can accept as "scientific," or "demonstrably true," or in the various ways in which the scientists themselves define their own standards of scientific truth. To be sure, one may relate the emergence of the modern scientific outlook to such sociological facts as the passing of feudalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the "sociology of knowledge" approach is very fruitful in studying such phenomena. These, however, cannot be interpreted (and were not interpreted by Mannheim) as meaning that certain classes have a monopolistic proprietary interest, e.g., in the scientific outlook. Thus, modern Western science is not "class" science, to be replaced by something different should class relationships in the society change.

It is an intriguing question to ask what personality factors explain the different philosophical and scientific orientations of different scientists. I assume that these factors are manifold; that the social and family background does somehow enter into the picture; but that there is no simple one-to-one correspondence between class background and scientific mentality. On the contrary, scientists with similar class backgrounds may occupy opposite poles on the mentality scale, and others with different class backgrounds may share the same scientific mentality. This, by the way, is true of other major "ideological" divisions as well. Religious bodies in most cases include members of different classes, and the same socio-economic class in most cases includes members belonging to different religious (or non-religious) persuasions. I am not saying that allegiance to one or the other of the major "ideological" groupings is not socially determined. On the contrary, the causes of adherence to such groupings are primarily social. What is decisive, however, in this

respect is an individual's belonging to some primary, person-to-person group, such as the family or a "chosen" group, rather than class membership as such. The influence exerted by the class position is, so to speak, filtered through the inter-personal processes within the primary groups.

* * *

PEOPLE BELONGING to different classes may completely agree as to what is scientifically true, and if they disagree, it is not, as a rule, due to their different class backgrounds. In our own industrial culture, there seems to be remarkable consensus among all strata about "usable" scientific advice, such as medical advice; and if some submerged, marginal rural groups deviate from this pattern and consult their own non-university-trained practitioners, the reason is a genuine "cultural" difference rather than class difference as such. Consensus about scientific fundamentals is less, not greater, among experts; but here, too, the reason for divergence is not different class membership. It is not their class background that turns some psychologists into Gestaltists and others into anti-Gestaltists, or some sociologists into adherents of a "historic" type and others into adherents of a "physicalistic" type of sociology. Hence, we cannot assume that their differences of view are necessarily absolutely intractable, by virtue of a social determinism. In *some* cases, evidence and argument may produce an impression upon an opponent; different schools *may* learn from each other.

Does this mean that there are no completely stubborn differences, at least in so far as questions of fact or theoretical truth are concerned? Not at all. Most of us have dogmatic convictions, impervious to argument; and where such dogmas are touched upon, an epistemological *impasse* is reached, and the discussion cannot go on. There are, however, techniques of putting these dogmatic differences into brackets in order to make cooperation and communication possible; thus in our society there is a tacit consensus neither to agree about religion nor to argue about it. On the whole, we can maintain communications about facts by skirting dogmas. This may suggest that dogmatic positions are not, in our society, the reflection of class antagonisms.

But it is time to raise a question which may have occurred to the reader several times while he was following this discussion. Are there no "class ideologies" at all? Is everything either consensus or due to factors other than class?

By no means. What I have been arguing so far is that neither divergent philosophic-scientific views, nor different religious-dogmatic attitudes depend primarily upon class. But political orientations do, to a large extent. Here, too, the correspondence is by no means complete, but at least, it is substantial.* It is statistical correspondence, not a rigid causal one; we cannot say that two people who are members of the same socio-economic class will necessarily agree about political problems, but only that major political orientations will be more heavily represented in one class than in another. What interests us here is not politics on the everyday level, in the sense of actual political and legislative decisions favored by members of this or that group, but rather those major orientations that need not be too clearly or closely related to social and economic interests, such as "progressivism," "liberalism" or "conservatism." Class membership seems to have a distinct influence on the distribution of these orientations.

But if so much is granted, does this not mean that the main drift of our argument has been fallacious? After all, one may argue, nothing in culture can be neatly separated from politics. Everything has political implications, and is influenced by politics; neither philosophy, nor science, nor art can be completely non-political. If, then, class is a major determinant of political orientation, then it must influence all other orientations as well.

I do not think, however, that this follows. For even granting that politics in a way affects everything, we cannot infer that one's political orientation, as colored by his "class" status, reflects itself directly in his production and appreciation of art, philosophy or science. It is one thing to say that the scientist or philosopher must, and does, worry about the political use that his discoveries or principles will be put to by others, and another thing to say that he must, or does, translate everything he says and thinks into political terms; and likewise for the artist, the religious man, and so on. It would be deadly for the scientific, artistic, etc., impulse if either the creative or the appreciative individuals in these fields had to ask themselves at each step: "Now, is what I am saying or hearing 'good' for my politics?" Such political self-censorship is ruinous for both the creation and the appreciation of cultural values.

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* Evidence on this point is contained in "The Psychology of Social Classes: A Study of Class Consciousness," by Richard Centers, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949.

These cultural pursuits can thrive only if those who are engaged in them maintain their autonomy from politics.

THIS AUTONOMY does not mean complete separation from politics. For instance, it is clear that the social order must have certain characteristics if the "autonomous" pursuit of cultural values is to be possible. In this sense, all those engaged in cultural pursuits, whether as creators or as appreciators, have a vital stake in politics. The autonomy of cultural pursuits from politics is itself a major *political* objective which those interested in an autonomous culture cannot neglect. Cultural values can be realized only in a free society.

Nor do I want this "autonomy" to be understood in a completely individualistic sense, as if each individual communed directly, so to speak, with disembodied values. I have already mentioned that basic attitudes are acquired in primary, person-to-person groups; in this sense, all value attitudes are social phenomena. And it is also clear that these person-to-person groups themselves are parts of larger collectivities; they share in collective experiences and aspirations. However, — and this is, I think, vital to the problem of the cultural and sociological determination and relativity of values—the person-to-person groups in which basic value attitudes are transmitted and elaborated cannot be considered as mere *exponents* of the more inclusive and "abstract" collectives. They never merely transmit directives. On the person-to-person level, there is always a creative assimilation, incarnation, "living through" of directives by autonomous persons. Where all social units are merely the exponents of an authority or of a collective will, the sphere of personality vanishes. There is no place in such a society where value directives can be worked out freely—and also challenged—by autonomous persons; but then, the values themselves must degenerate. On the other hand, in a society in which personal forms of association have a role in working out social directives, the result will never simply mirror a collective experience or aspiration.

Hence, I do not believe that basic conceptions, e.g., of scientific truth, can be understood as "class ideologies," even if they first arise within a class and are somehow related to its collective experience. Whenever any basic conception of some value is being elaborated on the interpersonal level, it somehow becomes "universalized": it will transform itself into an appeal to persons with varied backgrounds. If

it does not do that, it cannot survive. Over-specialization, whether of biological species or of belief systems, is always deadly; they cannot remain alive if they can exist in one kind of environment only.

Does this mean that we have to return to the old conception of "common sense"? Certainly not—we do not assert that there is a stock of "rational" ideas about everything on which everyone could and should agree. But we do not want to rule out the idea of rationality, either of belief or of conduct, as an important aspect of man's cultural efforts. It would not be "rational" to believe that every conceivable practical or theoretical problem has a rational answer, but it is very rational to try to achieve the ideal of rationality wherever possible. Hence, we should not be afraid of boldly asserting, whenever we honestly believe we have a right to, that an insight we have is meant as a contribution to the rational solution of some problems, and not merely as an enforced response to some sociological stimulus. *Sapere aude.*

THE REVIVAL OF LIBERALISM

It Stands Anew and Unafraid

By GRANVILLE HICKS

IN HORACE Kallen's collection of essays and addresses, *The Liberal Spirit* (Cornell University Press), we have an admirable statement of the fundamentals of liberalism. Whether he is writing about religion, art, or politics, Dr. Kallen always emphasizes freedom of thought and inquiry, of discussion and criticism. The test of liberalism, so far as he is concerned, is not political, and certainly it is not economic. For him, liberalism is never a formula but always a way of approaching problems. Yet he does not withdraw himself from the practical issues of daily life, and the longest and best of his essays, "Organization of Freedom," is a concrete, realistic study of contemporary social conditions.

If, in spite of their many virtues, Kallen's essays seem rather old-fashioned, the times are at fault rather than Dr. Kallen. One thing that dates them is the fact that they are concerned to defend liberalism against its avowed enemies, whereas the current fashion among liberals is to attack liberalism's avowed friends. Lionel Trilling, for instance, has been carrying on a war against liberalism for years—in his book on E. M. Forster, in his novel, *The Middle of the Journey,* and in countless articles and reviews. Trilling, as a recent controversy in the *Partisan Review* finally made clear, considers himself a liberal, but he goes on using "liberalism" as a cuss word.

If this were merely an eccentricity on the part of Mr. Trilling and such disciples of his as Richard Chase, one could ignore it, but the unhappy fact is that he has a good deal of right on his side. He may be, as I think he is, careless in his use of language; he may even be guilty of a kind of doubledealing; but his indictment of what currently passes as liberalism cannot be shrugged off. "I believe," Trilling asserts, "that liberalism has debased its whole intellectual heritage." One balks a little at so sweeping a statement, but it is easy to show that that heritage has been betrayed and corrupted by certain self-styled liberals.

Take the strange case of Harold Laski. His *Liberty in the Modern State* (Viking), first published in 1930 and now revised and given

a new introduction, is, among other things, a searching defense of freedom of the mind. As an individualist and pluralist, Laski will have no truck with Hegelian glorification of the state. Government, big business, the churches, busybody censors—he defends freedom against them all. He recognizes no higher authority than the individual conscience. "I agree that, for most of us, conscience is a poor guide," he writes. "It is perverse, it is foolish, the little knowledge that it has is small alongside the worth of the social tradition. But perverse, foolish, ignorant, it is the only guide we have. Perverse, foolish, ignorant, it is at least ours; and our freedom comes from acting upon its demands."

This is in the great liberal tradition, and in such passages Laski speaks as a worthy disciple of John Stuart Mill. But the very same book is also an apology for Soviet Russia, which Laski describes as "the pioneer of a new civilization." He does not deny that the Soviet Union is a ruthless dictatorship, with "no liberty to criticize the fundamentals of the regime" and "no liberty to oust the Communist leaders," but in the next breath he insists that we must see the dictatorship "in a proper perspective." This means, of course, that we must find excuses. We must remember that pre-revolutionary Russia was a backward country, that the Soviet Union has been constantly warred upon, that new regimes are likely to go to extremes, and so forth and so on.

In short, freedom ceases to be the real issue the moment Laski begins to talk about the Soviet Union. More than that, his critical judgment, which is razor-sharp when he is dealing with Great Britain or the United States, is suddenly blunted. Let me quote one passage: "In the treatment of criminals, in the scientific handling of backward peoples, in the application of science to industry and agriculture, in the democratization of culture, in the conquest of racial prejudice, and in the provision of opportunity to the individual . . . the Soviet Union stands today in the forefront of civilization." This sort of statement could be made in the early thirties with some show of plausibility, but today there is a great body of evidence that calls into question every single one of the claims this passage makes—evidence summarized, for instance, in Arthur Koestler's *The Yogi and the Commissar*. Laski must be familiar with these counter-claims, and one would think he would feel an obligation to acknowledge if not to controvert them, but he writes as if he were presenting the simple, unchallengable truth.

In the role of libertarian, Laski says categorically, "The one assured

result of historical investigation is the lesson that uncontrolled power is invariably poisonous to those who possess it." Invariably! As Soviet apologist, however, he is willing to concede only that the Soviet dictators "may" be poisoned by their power, and hastens to point out "some facts of significance on the other side." The Soviet Constitution, for instance, "may" turn out to be "an immense step forward." There is a way open "in logic" for the Soviet rulers "to transform the processes of coercion into the processes of consent." And if freedom does not thrive in Russia, Mr. Laski knows where to put the blame: "If America becomes hysterical about Soviet 'expansionism,' it slows down the pace of Soviet democratization." (If ever I saw a misplaced pair of quotation marks, it is in that sentence.)

* * *

THE BOOK displays the total debasement, the absolute bankruptcy of liberalism. On the one hand, Laski betrays the principles of freedom he so ardently advocates, and, on the other, he checks the free functioning of his own reason. Like a good many others, his mind is wonderfully free except when it encounters his sacred dogmas. "It cannot be too strongly emphasized," he says, "that those who seek the new social order are in this hour soldiers in the army of freedom." A critical liberal, obviously, would want to know what kind of social order these soldiers are seeking and how they propose to bring it about, but Laski impatiently rejects such qualifications. He has taken all the diverse and complicated forces that work against freedom and wrapped them up in one bundle, which he has labeled "capitalism," and he has proclaimed that freedom would inevitably result if capitalism were abolished. Clearly this is not the way things have worked out in Russia, but Laski goes on riding his dogma, over the dead bodies of liberty and reason.

In his article in the *Partisan Review,* Trilling attacks not only Stalinism but also "liberalism as it tends to corrupt itself by approaching Stalinism as a limit." Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in *The Vital Center* ($3, Houghton Mifflin), also denounces the Stalinoid pseudo-liberals, the Wallaceite progressives, the Doughfaces as he calls them, picking up a term from the post-Jacksonian period. These are, beyond question, the people who have done most to bring liberalism into disrepute, and they deserve to be scourged; but, as Trilling has repeatedly pointed out, pseudo-liberalism is not limited to the fellow-travelers.

Irwin Ross, for instance, is no friend of the Soviets, but his *Strategy for Liberals* (Harper) displays some of the same fallacies as Laski's volume. Mr. Ross rejects not only Soviet practice but also the theory of all-out socialism, favoring a mixed economy. What he says about the various mixtures of government control and private enterprise that have been adopted or proposed is often interesting, but much of the book is concerned with the problem of power, and here he talks in terms of friends and enemies, good and bad, left and right, white and black. Of course power is important, but the way power is used is more important for liberals than the way it is obtained and held. Except for his disillusionment with Russia, Ross seems to have learned nothing from the thirties, and there are long passages, especially in his discussion of left-wing failures in Europe, when his book is an anachronistic echo of John Strachey's *Coming Struggle for Power.*

Dangerous in itself, Mr. Ross's preoccupation with power also serves to narrow the field within which his mind works. The book's most serious shortcoming is its failure to suggest new possibilities for American life. Ross can see nothing but a struggle between the good people, whom he chooses to call liberals, and the bad people, the capitalists, reactionaries, fascists. Not only is this kind of simplification intellectually shoddy; its ineffectualness even on the practical level has been remorselessly demonstrated in our times. If there is any way for us out of our present predicaments, it can be found only by bold, subtle, original, imaginative thinking. The real world is vastly more complicated than the world Ross deals with, and if there are depths of evil in it that he fails to take into account, there are also possibilities for good that he does not try to visualize.

Then there is Max Lerner, who has made another collection of his *PM* columns. *Actions and Passions* (Simon and Schuster) exhibits Lerner in a relatively anti-Soviet mood: he is wary, at any rate, if not hostile. Yet he is the same old Lerner, with the same old flair for over-simplification. He always seems to know that the complexities are there, and sometimes he appears to be about to come to grips with them, but he never quite does. (This is the quality that *PM* readers used to admire in his work: as they would say, he makes everything so clear.) Doubts are resolved, qualifications are forgotten, and the shining truth emerges. There is always something that must be done immediately to save the world, and Lerner knows just what it is.

In one of his more portentous pieces, he describes the two camps of American liberals—those who blindly admire Russia and those who are so concerned with Soviet evils that they can see nothing else. There must be a new synthesis, he says, and he draws up a prospectus: "It must reject Russian totalitarianism without rejecting Russian friendship or world peace. It must reject the Communist philosophy without depriving Communists of their rights and protections under the law. It must take over the technical and managerial advances made under capitalism, and use them for the collective welfare under new social forms. It must count as the big enemy fascist reaction, whether it appears in feudal regimes abroad or in our own hearts."

* * *

ANY READER of Lerner will realize how fully typical this is. To begin with, there is a neat, but false, dichotomy. It is true that Stalinism is a crucial issue for liberals, but one cannot separate the sheep from the goats quite so easily as all that. As we have seen, pseudo-liberalism is not limited to the fellow-travelers, and, as we are about to see, not all anti-Soviet liberals are impotent. Furthermore, even a master dialectician is bound to have trouble in reconciling opposites, and, as a matter of fact, what Lerner offers as a new synthesis is simply his old formula: the abolition of capitalism by means of a revival of the anti-fascist united front. Like Ross, but with better reason since he was very happy in those days, he is living in the thirties. To make his nostalgic formula palatable, he winds up with some high sentiments: "Let us remember that if liberalism is dying it is dying only as the phoenix dies. Out of its own ashes comes, even if dimly and afar, the figure of the risen phoenix."

It is really no wonder that Trilling—among others—is revolted by all this. But where does one draw the line? Is it enough to say that the Laskis and even the Rosses and Lerners are not true liberals? Shall we simply read them out of the party? Or must we look for the sources of their errors in the liberal tradition itself? Trilling goes the whole hog. Explaining a phrase he has been fond of using, "the moral imagination," he writes: "My own intention for the phrase was that it should stand out against what I detect as an assumption of liberal culture, that the life of man can be nicely settled by a correct social organization, or short of that, by the election of high moral attitudes. It was intended to mean,

if I may quote myself, that the very election of morality constitutes a kind of moral danger, as does the correct social attitude."

Even here one cannot quarrel with Trilling, for the liberal tradition has often been both smug and narrow. What is difficult to determine is the position from which Trilling judges liberal culture. One wonders if he isn't making the most of both the world of freedom and the world of authority. Up to a point, that is exactly what one should do, and nowhere is Trilling stronger than in his recognition of the valuable insights to be found outside the liberal tradition. It is a different matter, however, when he criticizes liberalism as if he believed that he spoke with a kind of authority to which no liberal can lay claim. His persistently pejorative use of "liberal" would be comprehensible in an authoritarian, who could have no objection to handing the liberal tradition over to the Laskis and the Lerners, but it is troubling in a man who professes loyalty to that tradition. Perhaps his obsession with Stalinism has led him astray. He is quite right in believing that liberalism needs the moral imagination, but he should not assume that that is all there is to be said about liberalism.

There is a kind of liberalism that has broken not only with Stalinism but with the whole progressive-Stalinoid type of mind, that is not incapable of searching out the weaknesses in the liberal tradition, that is nonetheless firmly liberal and resolutely active. This kind of liberalism is greatly strengthened by Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center.*

Mr. Schlesinger is not taken in for a moment by the Doughfaces. Much of his book is devoted to Communism, and he says the things that need to be said, fairly, intelligently, without hysteria, and with tremendous force. At the same time he sees clearly that there is a larger issue than Communism, that Communism is merely a symptom of the revolution we so completely take for granted in our daily lives, the revolution that has been wrought by science and technology. "The human race in the last three centuries," he writes, "has been going through a global change of life. . . . The velocity of life has entered a new phase. With it has come the imperative need for a social structure to contain that velocity, a social structure within which the individual can find some measure of self-fulfillment. . . . The specifications for the new society cannot but strain to the utmost the emotional and moral resources of the individual and his community. In retrospect, these demands seem to

have been too severe and exhausting. Civilization has not met them, which is why today it is consumed by anxiety and fear. Failing to create a new social structure, it has become the victim rather than the master of industrialism."

Obviously this a more inclusive and therefore more adequate account of our situation than the formulas of Laski and Lerner, and this enlarged awareness is the great strength of Schlesinger's book. The brilliance of *The Age of Jackson* was sometimes marred by an assumption that the good people were all for Jackson and the bad people all against him, but here Schlesinger is consistently realistic. "In Marxist works," he writes, specifically citing Harold Laski's *The American Democracy,* "the Capitalist dwarfs and dominates the other characters much as Satan dwarfs the good angels in *Paradise Lost.*" His contention is that the average American business man is a good deal more like George F. Babbitt than he is like Lucifer, and he distrusts a government of business men, not because it is bound to be ruthless and tyrannical but because it is likely to be timid and inept. "Terrified of change, lacking confidence and resolution, subject to spasms of panic and hysteria, the extreme right-wing elements keep the American business community in far too irresponsible a condition to work steadily for the national interests, at home or abroad."

Unafraid of the capitalists, Schlesinger is also unafraid of the Communists, though he refuses to underestimate the threat of Stalinist totalitarianism. He believes that liberalism in America is regaining its nerve, and, as he says, he speaks for a generation that is not disillusioned if only because it was too young to be caught by the Soviet myth. He is able to see the non-Communist left not as a reaction against Russia but a positive force for freedom, and he has great confidence in its leadership, both abroad and at home. (He would be more than human if he failed to get in a plug for the organization of the non-Communist left in which he himself is a leader, Americans for Democratic Action.) Neatly turning the tables on Max Lerner, who, as he reminds us, talked of revising the Holmes-Brandeis doctrine of "clear and present danger" when it was a matter of suppressing fascists, he attacks anti-Communist hysteria and witch hunting, and combines a resolute defense of civil rights with a clear-headed understanding of Communist dangers. He defends the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan—containment and reconstruction—and dissociates himself from the warmongers

without ignoring the possibility of war. He knows the weak spots of democracy, but pleads for democratic faith.

* * *

ALL THIS is good, but is it good enough? Of course not, and Schlesinger, I am sure, would be the first to admit it. In his first chapter he sketches the principal characteristics of our age of anxiety, and he is as well aware as anyone that his remedies are several sizes smaller than the problems he poses. Because he knows that totalitarianism is a product—though not an inevitable product—of the technological revolution, he does not assume that we can dispose of the danger once and for all either by containing Soviet aggression or by adopting any particular program of domestic reform. He offers nothing but a plan for the first skirmishes in a struggle that will go on indefinitely.

Even within his own modest limits, moreover, Schlesinger is not always satisfying. He realizes, for instance, that there is a cultural problem and that it is closely related to the problem of democratic morale. "More people read and write," he observes, "but what they read and write tends to have less connection with themselves. We have made culture available to all at the expense of making much of it the expression of a common fantasy rather than of a common experience." This is well said, but what are we to do about it? Can anything significant be done either with or against mass culture? It would be unreasonable to ask Schlesinger to discuss all the problems of contemporary society, but the cultural problem deserves more than a paragraph.

He is only slightly less cursory in dealing with a related issue, the role of voluntary associations. "A democratic society," he states, "based on a genuine cultural pluralism, on widespread and spontaneous activity, could go far to supply outlets for the variegated emotions of man, and thus to restore meaning to democratic life." The mere recognition of the value of independent groups is a mark of superior insight, for the pseudo-liberals can think of nothing but the state, and the urban intellectuals are usually contemptuous of all associations—except, of course, their own cliques. But here again Schlesinger is content to throw off an idea without bothering to develop it, whereas if the idea is important at all, it is very important indeed.

To register one more objection, Schlesinger has his own dichotomy: "On the one hand are the politicians, the administrators, the doers; on the other, the sentimentalists, the utopians, the wailers. . . . This split

goes to the very heart of the liberal predicament. Where the doer is determined to do what he can to save free society, the wailer, by rejecting practical responsibility, serves the purpose of those who wish free society to fail—which is why the Doughface so often ends up as the willing accomplice of Communism." This is moderately dangerous doctrine. I heartily agree that liberalism must accept "the limitations and possibilities" of the real world, and I believe in doing; but it is risky business, particularly in this country with its anti-intellectual traditions, to glorify the doers. (As a matter of fact, the Doughfaces, though not doers themselves, usually have a masochistic admiration for organizers, revolutionaries, and even machine politicians.) In just this passage Schlesinger sounds a little bit like his friend Bernard DeVoto, who is not above adopting the mucker pose. If it is important for liberals to do, it is even more important for them to think.

Schlesinger's virtues, however, far outweigh his shortcomings, and they can best be defined in some such context as this review creates. He is, obviously, quite incapable of the schizoid absurdities into which Laski has fallen. He not only sees through the Stalinist fallacy; he sees all around it. More than that, the complexities that are only words for Max Lerner are realities for him, and he is able to take them into account. Although he and Irwin Ross are both members of Americans for Democratic Action, he does not share many liberals' obsession with power against the capitalist class. He is as true to the central tradition of liberalism as Kallen, but a good deal more aware of the problems and dangers of the present day.

I should not like to commit myself to the proposition that Schlesinger is the John the Baptist of a liberal revival, but he is a happy omen. In the present state of confusion and corruption, such critics as Lionel Trilling are badly needed, but sooner or later we shall have to make up our minds where we stand and what we stand on. If liberalism hasn't within itself the power of self-purification, then we had better abandon it—for whatever authoritarian dogma we can bring ourselves to swallow or for out-and-out defeatism. If it has, then there is a job to be done, and we had better be about it. Schlesinger has seen, more or less accurately, what the job is, and he has gone to work at it.

THE IRON LAW OF BUREAUCRACY

Michels' Warning to the Left

By PHILIP SELZNICK

THIS is the bluntest challenge to the viability of social idealism: can the indispensible instruments of action be presented from turning into things alien, and unclean, devouring, ultimately, ideal and idealist alike?

In approaching this general problem we should avoid looking at the devil with fascinated eyes. Or, what is much the same thing, we should avoid mistaking the abstract for the concrete. Social theory necessarily deals in abstractions; yet in communicating it we often seem to be talking about concrete reality "as it is lived" instead of about abstract and general relationships. This confusion of aspects of things with concrete reality is often met in the somewhat traumatized reactions of those of us who have been impressed by Robert Michels' analysis of bureaucracy in democratic organizations.

Michels' classic work was published in this country under the title *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy.** In this book we find a detailed analysis of European movements—especially the German social democracy—used as case materials for the elaboration of a theory of leadership and organization. Michels puts forth the following propositions:

1) Democracy cannot function without organization;

2) Organization involves the delegation of functions and powers to leadership;

3) This delegation results in a concentration of organizational skills and prerogatives in the hands of the leadership;

4) Leadership thus has the capacity to emancipate itself from the mass and become independent of its control, hence self-perpetuating;

5) The mass is psychologically and technically dependent upon the leadership and submits itself to bonapartist manipulation;

(* Reprinted in 1949 by The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois, $5.)

6) Where significant challenges to the leadership occur, these come from other elites;

7) In sum, the indispensable prerequisites of democratic action are themselves productive of consequences which frustrate the aspirations of democratic idealism.

Michels concludes, on the basis of this anaylsis, that "the socialists might conquer, but not socialism, which would perish in the moment of its adherents' triumph." Nor is it only the fate of socialism. Its "future" is but one instance of the "iron law of oligarchy." The law holds that the democratic ideal of self-government itself is impossible.

AT TIMES Michels has been over-emphasized. But this has been made necessary by the utopian illusions of both Marxists and sentimental democrats. The Marxian interpretation of history cannot admit that there may be social processes which are not time-bound and which may persist in a society despite revolutionary changes in the economic and political status quo. He therefore expects that socialism will do away with the law of oligarchy, in some automatic way, without specifying concrete procedures upon which reliance can be placed.* Such specifications are deemed to be unnecessary because it is supposed that socialism can bring a *general* resolution of tensions in society, creating a new human nature and new "laws of motion" for its economy and social institutions.

Like the Marxist, and sharing with him the heritage of Rousseau, the sentimental democrat expects simple participation in politics to yield good results. He finds virtue in such new forms as "grass roots democracy" without scrutinizing too closely the concrete way in which significant decisions are made. He does not undertake such a scrutiny—though he is "shocked" when oligarchical tendencies are called to his attention—because he is not armed with a theory which can guide his expections.

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* In 1933, Sidney Hook wrote: "In a socialist society in which political leadership is an administrative function, and, therefore, carries with it no economic power, in which the processes of education strive to direct the psychic tendencies to self-assertion into 'moral and social equivalents, of oligarchical ambitions, in which the monopoly of education for one class has been abolished, and the division of labor between manual and mental workers is progressively eliminated—the chance that Michels' 'law of oligarchy' will express itself in traditional form becomes quite remote." (Towards the Understanding of Karl Marx, pg. 312.) It is doubtful that Hook would accept his previous statement today.

It is this preparedness which Michels' theory can provide. We learn how democratic organizations will develop *if* they are permitted to follow the line of least resistance. We also learn that the way of combatting this bureaucratic trend includes the development of counterforces. Only power can check power, only new centers of strength, competing with the existing leadership, can be relied upon to defend the free institutions of a democratic society. This principle has been emphasized by Gaetano Mosca. If we apply it to the power structure *inside* trade unions and other democratic organizations, we see that freedom requires the competition of groups; and this is just as true for a specific organization as it is for society as a whole.

In a socialized democracy it is necessary to preserve areas of group conflict, based on enduring self-interest; similar processes within democratic organizations must be protected. The advocate of the welfare state cannot rely upon a single factional leadership, however benevolent; and trade-unionists ought not to create all-powerful executive boards, with the elimination of internal factions, no matter how lofty their motives.

Such a statement is relevant, for example about the United Auto Workers today, for the U.A.W. is one of the "idealistic" forces in America. The possibility of creating a one-party regime is not a result of evil-mindedness, but of the conditions of organizational existence, the exigencies of attempting to wield a group in action. The road to a monopoly of power is not always direct, not always consciously chosen by the traveler. The careful observer, sensitive to the value of democratic unionism, will seek out and attempt to check those tendencies which make it impossible for new groups within the union to develop and challenge the leadership. It may be that within major unions the maintenance of factions which have ties and commitments to outside institutions (especially religious and political) is one of the few ways that healthy, principled opposition to bonapartist leadership can be sustained. This may sound strange in the light of the hue and cry over communism in the labor movement today. But it is not the "outside" commitment of communist trade unionists which is so important; it is the *content* of that commitment which subverts the labor movement.

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THE EMPHASIS upon the bureaucratic potential in democratic organizations is necessary in order to avoid utopian programs, above

all those ideologies which would justify a monopoly of effective power by a single faction. At the same time, however, Michels' needed emphasis should not be permitted to result in an overstatement of the relevance of the doctrine. In this connection, the following points are prophylactic:

1) Michels' thesis is not a simple empirical generalization, based upon a statistical summation of concrete observations. It is a grounded universal, and as such deals with the relations between abstract characters of concrete phenomena. It does not tell us what we find in 85 out of 100 trade unions (or women's clubs, or political parties, or national states) studied; it does tell us about the *inherent predispositions* (hence about an aspect of the *nature*), of these organizations. We are told what must be taken account of in action; we are *not* told that nothing can be or is done to counteract these tendencies. As I put the matter some years ago, the Michels' thesis "emphasizes certain characteristic tendencies in the organizational process. These tendencies are, however, analytical: they represent abstractions from concrete organizational patterns. To state these tendencies is merely to *set* a problem, for although they ascribe to organizations in general an *initial presumption of bureaucratic consequence,* it always remains to be determined to what degree the bureaucratic tendencies have become dominant. It may be said, indeed, that this is the way organizations will develop if they are permitted to follow the line of least resistance. This is what does happen, often enough. But in the real world of living organizations there is always the possibility of counterpressure, of devising techniques for blocking the bureaucratic drift."* *The predisposition ought not to be confused with the concrete reality;* at the same time, knowledge of inherent tendencies can prepare us for deviation from our ideals and for the need to protect democracy against even its "best" protagonists—ourselves.

2) The apparently devastating conclusion that democratic self-government is an "impossible ideal" may be mitigated if one bears in mind that ideals are in their nature "impossible." Ideals, we may say, are always abstract and utopian, defining aspirations which can never be fulfilled in history. They function as judgments upon us, and in-

* "An Approach to a Theory of Bureaucracy," *American Sociological Review,* February, 1943. This piece is largely a restatement of Michels, with an attempt to provide a theoretical foundation which eliminates some of his more dubious psychological presuppositions.

form the concrete goals we set before us, but they ought not be confused with those goals. The Golden Rule, the classless society, and self-government are among such ideals; they are not situational, and in themselves do not help us to make the discriminations which are necessary in action. On the other hand, the concrete things to be desired, can be only partial renderings of ideal conceptions. This does not make them less valuable, for such deviations reflect the concreteness of life, including our multiple commitments and goals.

To strive for the complete achievement of any ideal is to deny life rather than to fulfill it. This is just as true for the single-minded activist as for the withdrawn "man of God." On the personal level, such an effort always involves the sacrifice of many values, including other persons who are seen as instruments to personal salvation. When ideals are social, and action is called for, the exclusive focus upon one sacred goal requires an even more radical erasure of other values, and the transformation of men into things. The search for complete fulfillment, in effect a flight from tension, results in over-concentration upon one aspect of the world, hence a rejection of the concrete complexity of life and choice.

It may be that the current emphasis upon ambiguity and tension, as components of a "tragic sense of life," is in part the result of a general misconception of the logical status of ideals. When ideals are taken as concrete goals, rather than as unrealizable judgments, we see each deviation as defeat, and feel that we live in a vale of unrelieved frustration. I think that in socialist circles this tragic view is largely self-induced, a result of the shock which inevitably follows the discovery that an ideal is "impossible." Such shocks are a normal part of growing up, for youth, fed by abstractions, is not always prepared for the ambiguity of values, hence must always overcome an initial sense of betrayal.

Michels' thesis helps us to understand what was accepted by wise men long ago—that institutions *as values* must take account of the low reliability of human benevolence and rest upon the sure interplay of group and individual self-interest. The American constitutional system is compounded of insights such as these; yet we do not necessarily believe that this system is less to be valued than some ideal constitution unqualified by the material conditions of democratic organization. Indeed, it is precisely because traditional patterns have "stood the test

of time," as reasonably adequate renderings of ideal conceptions, yet able to get along with other renderings of other ideals, that we do value them and consider them worth defending and perfecting.

The distinction between ideals and concrete goals is no semantic sleight-of-hand. The Christian is not frustrated because he is not Christ. Nor do we long for "ideal pictures, houses, or governments. What we value must be of this world, able to survive in a world of other values, and to function under conditions given in the situation at hand. Failing that, it can be of no use to us. To say, therefore, that self-government is an impossible ideal is to say that the institutional renderings of the ideal are necessarily such as will permit it to be embodied as a value. Once this is understood, the shock of recognition can be greatly eased.

3) Finally, it is well to bear in mind that Michels' theory about democratic organization may be seen as a special case of the general recalcitrance of the human tools of action. The tendency for goals to be subverted through the creation of new centers of interest and motivation inheres in all organization. Deviations from rationality are characteristic of military, industrial, and governmental bureaucracies as well as of voluntary associations. It is the function of leadership in these contexts to overcome the tensions and dilemmas created by these deviations. This is so well understood that it rarely provokes comment; yet it might be possible to take a "tragic" view of things by emphasizing the continuously precarious quality of delegation, the persistent need to institute counter-measures to overcome the recalcitrance of individuals and sub-groups within administrative structures. If we bear this context in mind, it will be more readily possible to view Michels' theory as posing a technical problem for democracy rather than as an attack upon the viability of democratic idealism itself.

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THESE REMARKS raise the question of the meaning of "bureaucracy" There is a basic ambiguity in the use of the term, which ought to be cleared up, if the insights of Michels are to be integrated into a more general framework. Very often, the word is used to identify *any* administrative hierarchy. There is a pseudo-sophistication here, partly motivated by the effort to disarm "reactionary" critics of government by admitting in advance that administrators are bureaucrats and agencies bureaucracies. (Among the sociologists, the roots are different, but we need not

be concerned with that here.) This has a certain tactical value, but ultimately it may be self-defeating. In the long run, we cannot "answer" a criticism by ignoring it; and more important, in rejecting the common-sense notion, we rob ourselves of much-needed tools of self-analysis.

In ordinary usage, "bureaucracy" has an invidious connotation, signifying arbitrary decision, red tape, and, in general, deviations from the true function of the organization because of the self-interest of the officialdom. These complaints, characteristic of clients who deal with telephone companies or government offices, do not necessarily express the most significant aspects of bureaucratic behavior. But the attention to *deviations* from professed goals and rational systems is basic. To the usual criticisms, often trivial, we need only add current insights on the role of power relations among officials in order to see that Michels' theory is fundamentally consistent with the common-sense usage. In his analysis, bureaucrats are officials who concentrate power in their own hands, and function according to their own interests. All officials tend to do this, but there is a significant difference between the predisposition and the fulfillment.

It therefore seems desirable to hold to the common-sense notion, properly reformulated, in order to be able to distinguish between situations in which deviations are minimal, and those in which incipient bureaucratic tendencies have come to be dominant. Recognizing the inherent potential, we will be prepared for it when it becomes manifest; and we may be able to devise methods of checking the frustration of action by the tools to which we are committed.

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AN EXAMPLE of this self-analysis, as it relates to organizational character, may be found in my study of the Tennessee Valley Authority.* In approaching this organization, with which I felt some political identification, I began with the assumption that there would be deviations from its avowed goals. This led me to examine the "grass roots" doctrine of the agency, with an eye to the power relations, internal and external, to see whether this doctrine was functioning as a shield for covert bureaucratic interaction. It was found that in a major portion of the Authority's program something of this sort did indeed occur resulting in some frustration of this agency's democratic potentialities. Adap-

* TVA and the Grass Roots. University of California Press, 1949.

tation to conservative agricultural interests in the Valley resulted in unanticipated consequences for the role and character of the organization. Without going into details here, it is nevertheless possible to point to the kind of lesson which can be drawn, on the basis of a technical analysis which recognizes the inherent tendency to deviation but views this as setting a problem, rather than as an excuse for wails about incomplete achievement.

The adaptation to which I refer (to such powerful interests as the American Farm Bureau Federation) involved an *organizational* as well as programmatic capitulation. In effect, a "right wing" was built *inside* the TVA which controlled the agricultural program. This group represented within TVA the interests, organizational and programmatic, of its *external* constituency. In other words, this was not a case of simple compromise, made by an organization which retains its internal unity; it was a case of creating a split in the character of the organization, as evidenced in the alienation of a group within it. As a result, the TVA was unable to retain control of the course of the basic compromise. Concessions were demanded and won which may not have been essential if there had been fundamental unity within the organization.

It follows that a leadership faced by the necessity to make compromises—this necessity I do not question—ought to be careful that these are made self-consciously so that the character of the organization can be defended. Compromises made in action need not involve organizational capitulation, though of course they very often do so. There is a significant difference between personnel which does "what is necessary under the circumstances," while retaining its basic loyalties and aspirations, and personnel which belongs to the camp of the enemy. If the compromise is made by drawing into the organization elements loyal to the external force, then it may be expected that the impact upon the character of the organization as a whole will be unforeseen and uncontrolled.

* * *

WHILE THE adaptation of government agencies to pressure groups, especially as this adaptation has unanticipated consequences for a promethean mission, requires considerable attention, there is another lesson to be learned from it. In the course of indignation against "reactionary interests," it should not be forgotten that the relation between government agencies and private social forces is one important method

of making such agencies responsive to relevant publics. In the evolution of the American democratic system, government by pressure has been one answer to the inadequacy of the abstract relation between the state and the people at large. Something more is needed than elections to express the will of the people and curtail the discretion of an increasingly powerful state. (This is not to say that there is nothing dangerous here, for example, in the substitution of an activist conception of democracy for the procedures of parliamentary constitutionalism.)

The point is that private organizations, built to sustain an agency of government, may have a decisive influence upon its social policy and may curtail statist bureaucratic trends. This is managed largely through devices which make the agency dependent on the private organization for legislative appropriations and which bind the two organizations together through mutual recruitment of personnel and channels of easy and continuous communication. Whatever may be the evils of uncontrolled pressure-group tactics, the utility of these constituency relationships between particular agencies and private associations is so great that anyone who suggests that in some new social system (presumable more democratic) they will be abolished is somewhat naive. In a socialized democracy, pressure groups would not be unnecessary; on the contrary they would be indispensable tools for maintaining the coexistence of large-scale government intervention and political democracy.

The problem of bureaucracy is crucially relevant to that of defining the basic commitments, self-image, and aspirations—in a word, the "character"—of the organizational tools of action, whether of private associations or of the state. The questions go far beyond the usual considerations of bureaucracy to include, for example, that of the consequences for the character of trade unions of the check-off and other devices which foster labor-management integration. In this general area there is work ahead for social scientists who wish to strengthen the forces of democratic idealism.

A JESUIT LOOKS AT PROUDHON

Competition in Damnation

By PHILIP RIEFF

FATHER DE LUBAC can say anything he wishes about Proudhon* Even more than most seminal tongues, Proudhon said everything. If he became famous with his saying, in 1840, that "Property is theft," later he said property was liberty. If he said "God is evil," he also said God is "the conscience of humanity." It is difficult to say of Proudhon at one time what will be true at another. Thus it has been comparatively easy for each commentator and biographer to build their own Proudhon, in turn. Reading Proudhon, as Herzen said, never furnishes results, only weapons and styles. That may explain how Sorel can possibly be Proudhon's finest extension, in one direction. An entire political spectrum, anarchist to royalist, has been able to claim him, to use him as a weapon and as a style. The thing is to know what remains true for all of the Proudhons, or better, what is true in Father de Lubac's Proudhon.

Proudhon contradicted himself all his life, as readily as he contradicted others. This was not to become famous, although the style brought him his first fame. Some commentators and antagonists assumed he contradicted himself because he had contradictory ideas, and loved them all. Others, including de Lubac, understand that Proudhon considered himself always a Critic. The function of the Critic is to contradict; to play the minority, or better to create one; to be the eternal nay-sayer, the somewhat disloyal opposition, even of himself and of his own criticism. The role of the Critic is as conscience in the Protestant tradition, to express a constant protest against whatever is. Proudhon knew he could be a Critic, and nothing else. To be a Critic meant he could never quite be a politician, or enjoy a mission, or breed disciples and found a school. Proudhon decided early the role of the Critic was the only one he could play. Critics are made by temperament, not by insight. A politician can have insight without being a Critic. His own insight into his critical temperament confirmed Proudhon in a life-long role. "You know that, by temperament," he concluded, "I rather make

* The Un-Marxian Socialist by Henri de Lubac, Sheed and Ward.

fun of everything, even my own beliefs, and . . . this constitutes the basis of my conscience."

Critics, at least in ages when there were fewer of them, must become famous. John Selden made the rule of critical fame pointed enough: Preach Damnation, he said, in a famous aphorism, "for we love a man who damns us, and we run after him to save us." Proudhon preached a kind of Damnation, but never to save men. It was his function to damn, and whatever other men sought to create he sought to destroy. He took *"Destruam et Aedificabo"* as his motto from 32 *Deuteronomy*. Bakunin picked up and polished the motto of his teacher for himself: *"The passion for destruction is a creative passion."* Proudhon would have agreed. He carefully left behind him no disciples, no systems, and no movements; not even Bakunin or Anarchism. Syndicalism was a movement, and many men have called themselves Proudhonians. In France, certainly until 1895, even until 1914, when the French trade union movement obeyed the state as it went to war against another state, the working class movement was Proudhonian. But to be a Proudhonian was to be unpolitical, so far as politics must have always to do with the capture of the state, not with its abolition by some vague supercession of the multiple trade union organs of the working class. Syndicalism is dead for not recognizing what it chose to deny: the persistence of politics as a struggle to capture the state, not to abolish it. Proudhonism did not organize parties, the organ of the political struggle for the power of the state, while it was Marxism that found expression in party organization. Marxism became a *political* movement, as Proudhonism, on principle, could not. This has made Proudhon famous without being important, creative without being politically constructive, in the history of European movements. As it turned out, he simply delayed Marxism. Proudhon did not leave behind the legacy for a movement, to contradict the Marxist, even though he contradicted Marx. Father de Lubac is not concerned with movements. Rather, he wants to know how Proudhon contradicted Marx, after he has told us why.

The answer, in the Jesuit writer's scholarly volume, is that Proudhon could not be politically constructive. As a Critic, he joined rarely, and resigned as often, organized nothing, and pretended to resolve nothing. A man who insists he cannot resolve—and that men cannot resolve—problems does not become a politician, or the intellectual father of power politicians. Probably, Proudhon taught Marx Socialism. At

least, Marx did not take up the concept of the class struggle until after he had read Proudhon. But Proudhon could not teach Marx his fear of Power, or his dread of optimism. This meant he necessarily contradicted Marx at every step, and particularly when Marx said "humanity lays down for itself only problems that it can resolve." On the contrary, according to Proudhon, the only problems humanity has are the ones it can never resolve. Change is not resolution. Neither is progress. Proudhon believed there was change and progress, but not resolution.

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PROUDHON'S THOUGHT, as de Lubac notices in the most important Chapter 7, is centered upon the concept of *antinomy*. "This word, antinomy," de Lubac writes, "summarizes for Proudhon a whole vision of the Universe." It meant, as Proudhon explained many times, a "contradiction . . . an opposition inherent, in all the elements, in all the forces which constitute the community." Everything, and everyone, for Proudhon, is "two-faced." "The world, the community and man are made up of irreducible elements, of antithetical principles and antagonistic forces." God is the first expression of Antinomy. Proudhon, who was something of a Biblical scholar, and had taught himself Hebrew, thought the Jews summed Him up as such: "The Lord is a man of war." "War is our history, our life, our whole soul. Once more, it is everything." War is Proudhon's poetic summary image of the natural law of Antinomy. It is an "inward act" as well as outward, the psychological condition of man, as well as political. It is the nature of all relationships that they be antinomical, the first relationship of God and men, of men and men, class and class. Proudhon does not mean to be paradoxical. He cannot help it if "everything in society is primarily a paradox."

Antinomy is the principle of destruction. But at the same time, Proudhon writes, it makes creation possible. It is the action of forces that must "clash and devour one another that is the only condition on which they are productive."

In many ways, Proudhon is a democratic philosopher of the 19th century. Nineteenth century thought did not deny the principle of Antinomy, rather it based its political thought upon it. "What makes freedom possible," wrote Proudhon, is "the opposition among powers." Nineteenth century democrats agreed. The opposition, as much as the

separation, of powers made freedom possible. If Proudhon was a pluralist, then he was a liberal-democrat. Pluralism is the first principle of liberal-democratic thought. Marx was right to call him a bourgeois thinker. Pluralism is inherent in the basic conceptual structure of Proudhon's thought. "Any one who says organism, says complication: any one who says plurality, says contrariety, opposition. . . ." Proudhon feared Power, when it was not pluralized, as he feared the masses when they voted together. In Power centralized, "man no longer belongs to himself, no longer feels for himself, no longer lives, is no longer anything." Power centralized leads to the dictatorship of the Bureaucracy, and that is a late stage of political self-alienation. "You are only a routine and you do not understand yourself."

What is necessary to the creativity of opposition—and here Proudhon is in the 19th century mainstream, still basic to contemporary sociological thought—is that the antinomical forces tend toward equilibrium, as the balance of power is momentarily necessary to political equilibrium. Equilibrium, moving balances, are leading principles of 19th century liberalism, if Spencer and Malthus can be called liberals. For Spencer, a moving equilibrium is the limiting principle in Progress (Evolution) as it is, in other areas of evidence, for Malthus. Proudhon shared the idea of Progress, and its moving equilibrium, with Spencer and with Malthus, to name only two secret sharers. Spencer and Malthus would have agreed with the French "Socialist": "Take away the antinomy and the progress of Beings is inexplicable; for where is the force which would produce progress?" If Malthus would object that progress is not infinite, that there are constant antinomical forces pushing toward an equilibrium, Proudhon would have to agree, despite his penchant for disagreement. It would be Utopian to think otherwise. The trouble with Marx is that he is a Utopian, granted his criticism of other Utopians. With Hegel, Marx "states the contradiction to 'rise above' it afterwards." Proudhon, de Lubac concludes, "notes the antinomy, and does not claim to resolve it." The antinomy is persistent. The Utopianism in Marx is to think it is not. Proudhon gave up the idea of the synthesis, and this retreat from Hegel meant, as de Lubac and others have said, that he gave up the idea of getting "beyond the antagonisms of existing society." Proudhon turned his principle, and his temperament, to a criticism of the theoretical basis of the analysis of social change in Hegelian thought, and thus, laterally, in Marxism.

WHAT HEGEL could not admit was that "an antinomy cannot be resolved, but that it indicates an oscillation or an antagonism susceptible only of equilibrium." The basic illusion Hegelian thought has projected upon the world is its optimism. Optimism, in this case, Marxism, has an eschatological dynamic, as theology and politics have always had. "People would like to see an end to it all, but I tell you . . . *there is no end at all.*" Proudhon had a Churchman's mind, not an Evangelical's. Eschatological thought must always hope, and its hope must be always that the antinomy will be resolved finally. Proudhon italicized his answer. *"The antinomy cannot be resolved."* The answer stands as his motto, better than the phrase from *32 Deut.* It is, as de Lubac says, even the motto of his "agony," since all his life he wanted to make a revolution. "We must make revolution, damn it! It is the only good thing, the only reality in this life!" Proudhon's "agony," "the persistent antinomy" is very close to the Christian idea of sin. The warfare image is, of course, standard as the symbol of sin in the Christian literature. Sin is the state of war 'in the heart of each.' But Father de Lubac carefully avoids making the connection himself. Good style is never obvious.

The answer Proudhon gave to Marx itself answers the question of why Proudhon's thought has been politically unimportant. Marx promised men they could, in time, relieve themselves of the agony. Sin, he promised, is really an internalization of social contradictions. It has not been very promising politics, particularly in ages of transition, to tell men the agony is immanent. But Proudhon rebutted that his politics were better and truer, however unsuccessful. Marx, like the theologians, is an idolator to promise men such things as an end of history. If the promise is wrapped in God, then "the fight against God is never-ending."

The curious may ask why a thinker in the first rank of Jesuit intellectuals has taken up Proudhon. Obviously, Father de Lubac takes delight in the man, and that is reason enough to write a book. But there are other reasons. Father de Lubac has taken up Proudhon to take him up; to take up a man is to have him serve one's own purposes. The Father understands that the controversy on the left has been much more than a logomachy, and in this situation it is relatively easy to achieve one of the most crucial kinds of polemical victories, the stealing of the symbols and the historic symbol-makers of the opposition. In

another place,* Father de Lubac has displayed his talent for casuistical stretching around the socialist position to engross it within one that is ostensibly Catholic. He writes that modern man is suffering from "a new ambition," the lust after self-mastery. Humanity, he continues, "means to forge its destiny." This is a "forbidden dream, a diabolical ambition." Man is "once more on the point of eating of the forbidden fruit, of usurping a *role* which is not his." Father de Lubac is parroting the style of his own critical tradition, but beneath the gentle digging there is substantial agreement. He concludes, in his own kind of language, that "Man's present evil cannot be reduced to some fault in the organization of society." But he does not allow Proudhon enough of his usual luxury of contradiction. Finally, for Proudhon, when religion becomes anthropology, and men are disenchanted even of this last ambition, they will achieve precisely what Father de Lubac rises to deny, utter self-mastery. The scholarly priest is unwilling to risk the Critic's final paradox.

* See: *The Dublin Review,* (London: Burns, Oates. First Quarter, 1948) No. 442, pp. 5-36.

THE PLANNER AND "THE PLANNED"

The Peasants of East Europe—A Case Study

By FELIKS GROSS

THE GREAT 'silent war' of our time is the conflict between the planners and the "planned." In every society the cake of custom holds strong, packed down by the strong emotional allegiances of tradition and the psychological reinforcement of habit. How does one persuade a people to change a way of life when new techniques arise or when the needs of a society have changed? How persuade the aborigine to give up long myth-sanctioned modes of hunting and try the more stable pastoral life? How convince the peasant, Indian, East European or South American, to abandon plowing methods hoed deep by the long line of ancestors and use new methods of tilling the soil? How win over the British workmen, long practised in work restriction and suspicious of change, to the idea that the new technologies are his only salvation? In short, how substitute new values for old.

In a democracy the planners are controlled to a greater or lesser degree by the "planned." In a dictatorship, however, the plan may run directly counter to the people's objectives and the people have no opportunity to check the pace. Since in the latter countries free expression of opposition is difficult, the conflicts between the planners and the "planned" take place in clandestine, oblique fashion.

Yet such conflicts do take place. Indeed, they assume a profound character and embrace in their scope almost every aspect of life. This is true because man's economic activities not only provide him with bread, shelter, and clothing, but also with customs, folkways, value-systems—in short, a way of life. Thus, if one seeks to analyze the impact and meaning of any economic event one must examine the values and life-habits which profoundly condition and color any human response.

* * *

THE SITUATION of the East European peasant is, perhaps, a classic subject for such study. His economic objective is certainly obvious; it is the personal control of land, either in the form of direct

ownership or, failing that, some similar form—as a lessee o rshare-cropper—which would permit him to keep the individual character of the economic unit. Soil, the land, is, however, more than a bare economic fact to the Russian, Bulgarian or Polish peasant; it is the summating experience of a whole cultural system. Take away from the East European peasant his land and his entire peasant culture collapses. To understand what land means to the peasant one must see him when he inspects his fields; he gazes at them as a mother gazes fondly at her children; these fields of oats, wheat or corn represent his world.

Nor is it the amount of land a peasant owns which gives him prestige in the village; prestige goes first of all to the "good farmer," the man who knows how to care for his field, who manages his land and homestead properly. Moreover, ownership in the peasant village is intimately connected with productive labor; there are no absentee landlords among the peasantry. A peasant and his family all work together, and it is seldom that they hire some outsider to help them. His relation to the land is an active and productive one, totall dissimilar to that of the city speculator for whom real estate is simply capital which he exploits.

Land gives the peasant a place in the world. The land he owns was owned by his father; it is not merely a tract of ground, but a trust handed down to him by his forebears. Land also gives the peasant a place in his community—he feels a part of it and knows that he belongs to it. All of his culture—his songs, his rituals, his customs—are connected with the land.

* * *

DESPITE THESE great emotional ties, Eastern Europe, during the last century, has witnessed a great shift of the rural population to the cities. The poor in the villages and on the farms were compelled to move to the city, in order to make a living. They left their villages not because they disliked their way of life, but because dire necessity—"land hunger"—drove them. And once the break was made with the village and the peasant worked in a factory in the city, there was little chance of his returning to his former life. Seldom could he earn enough money to return to his village and buy enough land to sustain his family, at least on the level he had enjoyed in the city. Only those peasants who were audacious enough to travel to the United States made enough money to finance the return to their native soil. Many of these—

Italians, Poles, Serbs—did go back, bought land, and settled down again as farmers. This quite frequent "two-way passage" is striking proof that the old peasant value-system still exerts a strong appeal.

Unlike the Western European farmer, the Eastern European peasant has not forgotten his past serfdom. Though the destruction of feudalism abolished serfdom in such countries as Italy, England, and France early in the modern epoch, serfdom, either as an actuality or as a cultural vestige, has remained a factor in Eastern European history until as late as 1864, the date when serfdom was finally done away with in Rumania. In his own childhood this writer remembers speaking to peasants who had experienced the whip of serfdom.

Emancipation meant for the peasant both freedom and land. The great Russian pro-peasant party was named, significantly, the Land and Freedom party, these being the two things for which the peasant most longed. Land itself was the very condition of freedom; a hungry man can hardly consider himself free, and land meant bread. And more than that, the land gave the peasant independence. This was true even under such semi-dictatorial regimes as existed in Poland and Lithuania. Obviously in a terroristic regime the peasant might lose his land; yet even under a semi-oppressive government there is still a chance for the peasant to remain free on the basis of ownership of his land. But take the land from him and he loses the economic base of his independence. Ownership of the land is thus the sum and substance of peasant freedom.

Actually, the emancipation of the peasants was a very half-hearted social measure. The peasants were liberated as the result of the decrees of reactionary rulers, who preferred to liberate them rather than see them join forces with the radical city population. At the same time, though, these rulers did not wish to lose their support among the gentry, and made sure of this by giving the peasants the absolute minimum of land. Emancipation did nothing but underscore by the feeble measures the historical "land hunger" of Eastern Europe.

As a result, "land to the peasants" became the strongest slogan for those political groups who were trying to win the support of the peasantry. Indeed, it was beneath the banner of this slogan that the second agrarian revolution of Eastern Europe, which can be dated from 1917 onwards, took place.

To win the peasants the Bolsheviks took over the Social Revolution-

aries' slogan of "Land to the Peasants." The Social Revolutionaries had already outlined in very specific detail a program for redistribution of the land, considering it the chief question facing Russia.[1] Lenin admitted this, explaining it as follows: Nine-tenths of the peasants have gone over to our side within a few weeks because we adopted an agrarian program that was not our own but that of the Social Revolutionaries, and put it into execution. Our victory consisted precisely in carrying out the social revolutionary program. That is why it was so easy."[2]

This "was so easy" because the Social Revolutionary program dealt with the land problem in a way which secured for the peasant his individual control over a piece of land, within a cooperative, organized social system that corresponded with his past traditions and cultural heritage.

* * *

THE EMANCIPATION from serfdom from 1848 to 1864 was Eastern Europe' first modern agrarian revolution; land reforms between 1918 and the 20's were the second, and land reforms and redistribution in 1945 and after, the third. But collectivization of land in Russia in the 30's and the collectivization now in progress in Eastern Europe was and is not a revolution from the peasant's viewpoint. On the contrary, it is a counter-revolution. When the Red Army occupied the Baltic Countries in 1940 the same process was repeated. They promised the peasants land redistribution, and at the start prohibited any agitation for collectivization. Later, of course, they themselves introduced it. Similarly, in 1945 and after, Communists all over Eastern Europe called for the redistribution of the land while remaining silent on the subject of collectivization. It was only after they had entrenched themselves and were sure of their power that they ruthlessly undertook a program of collectivization of the land. In fact, draconian action against the "kulaks"—the familiar scapegoats—often marked a struggle against the desires and objectives

[1] According to the "Fundamental Agrarian Law" of January 19, 1918, land should be placed at the disposal of the people, no longer to be regarded as a marketable commodity, but to be made available to anyone who wished to till it without the help of hired laborers. This law was passed in the Constituent Assembly and was drafted and brought to the floor by the Social Revolutionary Deputies. (Vladimir Zenzinov, "The Destinies of the Russian Peasantry," in *European Ideologies*, New York, 1948, p. 369.)

[2] Lenin at the Congress of the Comintern, June 22, 1921. (Zenzinov, *loc. cit.*, p. 470.)

of the entire peasantry. Thus, to win the support of the peasants the Communists propose the slogan, "Land to the Peasants," but to weld the bonds of power fast, to doubly insure their dominance, they impose on the peasants, and solely from above, collectivization.

* * *

HOW DOES the peasant himself view collectivization? Let us imagine a peasant living in a small village somewhere in Bulgaria. There is a dictatorship of the workers over the rest of the population—with over 80 per cent of Bulgaria's inhabitants employed in agriculture! How many workers are there?—about 10 per cent of the whole population. "Heavy industry" means the manufacture of cigarettes and pipe tobacco; large factories are few and far between. Petko, our peasant, does not have the time to read Lenin's "What It To Be Done? "or "State and Revolution," and even if he did, it would not impress him. He thinks in a direct, pragmatic, simple way. He is a peasant, he raises tobacco—and he sells his tobacco to the cigarette factory.

Why, he wonders, do the peasants who raise the leaves of the famous Bulgarian tobacco have to be ruled by the workers—those who cut the dried leaves, or those who roll them into cigarettes? Why is his son Kostia, who happens to work in the factory, better than he? Why a dictatorship of tobacco-cutters and rollers over tobacco-raisers? It does not make sense to Petko, nor does it sound progressive and democratic either. Old Stambuliski, the great peasant leader of Bulgaria whom the Fascists murdered, taught the peasants that democracy is the rule of the majority—and if one thing is certain to Petko, it is that the peasants form the majority in Bulgaria.

At the village inn, over a glass of *slivovitsa,* Petko shares his doubts with other peasants. All right, he says, there is a "dictatorship of the workers," — but what about the men who come to the village and preach the dictatorship? Certainly they aren't workers. They are obviously educated or at least half-educated men, who speak the language of the cities. They wear uniforms or dress in the style of towns-folk. They are strangers in the village, they understand little or nothing of agriculture and peasant life although they talk a lot about it. They are members of that "intelligensia" of the cities which the peasant has known only in unpleasant roles—as tax collectors, officers, prosecutors—the bureaucratic supporters of strong regimes. "A new privileged class"—our Petko thinks. The workers will surely not rule when such men are in

command. No, he thinks, this will be a dictatorship of the bureaucracy, which shall again be characterized by its lack of understanding of the needs of the village.

These missionaries of collectivization are, above all, intent on taking his land away from him. They want to "direct production," give him orders. Our Petko faces a future of being a worker without land, a landless peasant without his freedom. He remembers the bitter experiences—which his peasant brothers in Poland and Russia know so well—the experiences of being a landless peasant and working someone else's land, without the right to move or to buy land of his own—in short, the experiences of serfdom.

Dictatorship also means a secret police and strict political control. A host of policemen and informers will be put to work. The peasant hates this prospect too. His basic political philosophy is "let me alone." He is suspicious of the state and, though he might recognize the need for it, wants to have as little to do with it as possible.

Is all this progress? Is this what constitutes a great revolution? Our peasant Petko knows the answer—it is not a revolution for the great masses of the peasantry.

He knows also that the new rulers will destroy his homestead and the friendly community which gives him security. They will take away the soil he has been nurturing year after year, as his father had done before him. And when they take it away his life and work both lose their meaning. One can easily imagine what such a crucial change in a peasant's life must mean.

* * *

HERE WE have come to an obvious clash of values and objectives, between those who do the planning and those for whom it is being planned, between the theoreticians born in the cities and the men whose life is rooted in the soil of the villages. This kind of conflict was evident in the collectivization experiments in the Soviet Union of the 20's and 30's. The Soviet dictatorship tried to strengthen its grip by getting control over the village population, for they knew that the peasants constituted a potential opposition to the regime. But besides the problems of power, strong economic reasons prompted their action in the village—the urban centers did not have enough food. But both political and economic reasons for the conquest of the village received their justification from the general Communist theory. The Communist rulers were

determined to solve the peasant problems according to this *a priori* doctrine, and cared little whether their solution corresponded to the values and ideas of the peasantry.

All this brought on the terrific clash between the ruling Communist group and the peasants. The struggle began with the war against the richer peasants, but it soon spread and embraced the entire peasant class of Russia. Collectivization, nevertheless, went forward fast. While on July 1, 1928 only 1.7 per cent of peasant holdings were collectivized, by March, 1930 58 per cent of these holdings were within the *kolkhoz* orbit.[3] That is, the values and objectives of the minority were winning a quick victory over the values and objectives of the majority. It is clear that by the use of terror a minority and its values can win, but only in a limited sense, because terror is not an adequate substitute for economic and psychological incentives.

Wages have never been an incentive to the peasant. Moreover, in Russia, there have never been enough commodities produced in the cities to meet peasant's demand even if the farm laborer had received a good wage. All that had resulted from the revolution in the land was that the independent peasant had once again become dependent, and oppression by the gentry, the dreaded serfdom which he remembered from his father's day, was not replaced by the oppression of the commissars. The farm worker on the *sovkhoz* or on the collective farm worked only to keep himself alive. Terror is not an incentive; it is a whip.

Since they did not want to hand over their livestock to the hated ruling group, the peasants began to slaughter them. It was their answer to forced collectivization. The same reaction can be noted now among the peasants of the Eastern European satellite countries. Stalin admitted in "Izvestia," January 8, 1934) that livestock in cattle, horses, and hogs had been reduced almost by half, and sheep by two-thirds.

In Russia, in 1932, the great famine was a direct result of this clash of rival systems. It was a sociological famine, a famine caused solely by social conditions, by the desperate lack of seed, land, tools, manpower. No apologist dare blame this famine on natural causes. It came directly out of the ground prepared by the new social system, which had imposed by the use of terror a value-system—that held by a minority—upon the overwhelming majority of Russia's population. Walter Duranty esti-

[3] Minutes of the First All Union Convention of Vanguard Collective Holders, (Moscow, 1933, p. 38-39).

mated that, in this "man-made famine," as he called it, four to five million peasants died of starvation.

* * *

THE same process is now taking place in Eastern Europe, in the satellite countries. In 1945, when these countries were liberated from the Nazis, the Communist-controlled governments, supported by the Soviet regime, proclaimed a radical land reform and promised the land to the peasantry. Such a program was in accord with the desires of the peasantry, and was advanced at that time by the Communists for obviously tactical reasons. The plan was to get the support of the peasants while taking out of the hands of the peasant, socialist, and other democratic parties their most potent agitational weapon. Of course, all these democratic parties had for a long time supported just such a program, based on individual ownership of the land. They advocated a cooperative system which would extend from joint ownership of farm machinery to consumer's stores, founding their proposed system on the kind of small holdings which had been so successful in the Scandanavian countries.

Agriculture in Eastern Europe needed and still needs a technological revolution combined with great social changes in the distribution of the land. But to simply re-distribute the land is not enough; it must be accompanied by a general, well-planned change in the totality of conditions. While in exile, during the war, peasant leaders from the Eastern European countries prepared an agrarian program[4] in which all the major issues of a great agrarian reform—political, social, and technological—had been envisaged. The peasant, socialist, and democratic underground during the war put forward exactly the same ideas. Now, all these plans have been submerged in the wake of Soviet conquest—yet land reform still remains as an important political issue.

Once the Communist regime was established firmly in East Europe, the idea of collectivization appeared. And since, soon after this, a system of terror became the main instrument of government, the support of a free peasantry, or, at least, their reluctant neutrality was not needed any more. Peasant parties were soon destroyed, peasant and socialist leaders imprisoned, and the absolute political terror of the Communist Party and its secret police was instituted. To further insure the centralization

[4] *Agrarian Problems from the Baltic to the Aegean,* Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1944.

of its power, the Soviet regime set up State-controlled tractor stations, so that even the independent peasant, remains dependent on the favor of the dictatorship for his most essential tools, and therefore his livelihood.

"Jutro Polski" (February 1949), a monthly of the Polish Peasant Party in exile published in London, discusses, in an article based on first-hand reporting, the reaction of the Polish peasantry to the collectivization. A simple peasant, questioned by a Communist emissary about his attitude toward the *kolkhozes,* said: "If such a time arrived, that the *kolkhozes* must be, so certainly they will be. This is like war—if it it must be so it must. Like a rain, a drought. If it comes—so it comes, you cannot do a thing about it. . . . But you gentlemen, you know—that there is an end to the rain, there is an end to the drought, there is an end to the war and even a disease has its limits in time too. Because nothing is eternal only God. . . ."

* * *

WHAT ARE the inferences from all this? Should agriculture remain as it is? Should our society remain static? By no means. We know that the attachment of the peasant to the land may, but must not necessarily, lead to the depletion of the soil, making modern agriculture almost impossible. We know that agriculture has to be modernized socially and technologically, and has to be balanced with industry. We know, furthermore, that strong values do not necessarily postulate a static society. Moreover, we do not intend to idealize the peasant, though for the sake of our own clarity we have stressed his positive values. We do realize, however, that the peasant is often narrow and selfish in his approach to social problems, that he is more interested in local than in general, national problems.

Granting all that and even more, still the strong, positive values of the peasant's relation to the land remain. One cannot disregard them. It is clear that if one wishes to bring about progress in the economic situation of the peasantry, one must work through their value system and not against it. The peasant's active cooperation is the dynamic which the planners must have before anything else.

In Russia, peasants believed that the earth belonged to God and not to man, while to the peasantry belonged the right to work and make a living, on an individual property or quasi-property basis. With this in mind, the Social Revolutionaries advocated "socialization" of the land,

meaning by this that land belongs to the whole society, not to the state, and that this same land should periodically be redistributed to the peasants, who would work it on an individual basis. In that way, a peasant—though having direct control of his land—woud be a part of a cooperative system, which would institute proper methods of farming and social cooperation. This combination of private and social wonership meets the requirements of modern agriculture and also is in accord with the value-system of the Russian peasant. His relation to the land is not changed by such a program, none of his basic feelings are flouted, and at the same time both social and technological advances are capable of being made through the cooperative system. In fact, the cooperatives were instrument of economic and social progress in Russia. Moreover, they did not imperil freedom, but on the contrary strengthened democratic institutions both socially and economically.

In New Zealand there already exists a rough sketch of the kind of peasant society democratic socialists would like to see throughout the world. A good deal of the land there is owned by the Dominion government and leased to the farmer for long periods. If the farmer works his land himself, if he is an efficient farmer, then there is no difficulty in extending the lease indefinitely into the future. Indeed, afetr the death of the parents the children usually take over the same lease. The New Zealand agrarian set-up, which gives us a good working example of quasi-ownership system, deserves careful study for the constructive solutions it offers.

Small land property holdings combined with a cooperative system were also applied extensively and with great success in Denmark and the Baltic States, where, before the Soviet occupation, land was privately owned by the peasants. Most of these farms were small or medium-sized holdings, receiving their chief support from the strong network of cooperatives. Thanks to these cooperatives the small peasant was protected against exploitation, since he could sell his products directly through the cooperative system. Cooperative federations developed powerful agricultural industries (for instance, in Lithuania and the Scandinavian countries) based on local crops owned jointly by the community of small producers and consumers. In all these cases we have cited, the agricultural system has been advanced both technologically and socially without riding roughshod over the peasantry.

I DO BELIEVE that the only proof of real progress is in concrete results: when the masses of the people have a higher standard of living, shorter working hours, adequate leisure for cultural pursuits; when their children have greater opportunities for education; when the individual has both political an religious freedom; and when man is not threatened two or three times in a lifetime with war and total destruction. Only in so far as it advances the welfare of the people as a whole can any change of government or of economic system be considered progressive.

In all these problems the humanitarian principle emerges as a basic, essential touchstone. Progress is not a mechanistic change in an *a priori* scheme. And if it is, the inevitable consequence is the destruction of all our moral values and the establishment of a nightmare state, the kind of state which George Orwell has described at its furthest point of horror in his novel, "1984." In all our social and economic planning the real objectives—that is, the moral objectives—should never be lost sight of. Once they disappear the whole process of planning becomes a preparation for dictatorship and oppression.

The complete separation of economics from our values, our morals, our whole ethical system is a sheer fallacy. The aims of our economic activities cannot be limited only to the effort to satisfy our biological needs. Any anthropologist knows that the economic activities of primitive peoples are not determined by such narrow needs. The primitive has a rich religious and social life which finds its source in his life-philosophy; and it is also from this source that he fashions his attitude toward his economic tasks. We have suppressed this side of ourselves in modern society and refuse to see how much our very inventiveness and desire to improve and perfect—and, in a direct line of descent from this, our wish for a more perfect society, free of hunger, unemployment, oppression, and exploitation—influences the forms of our economics. But, we do have our guiding moral objectives. If we destroy them, we destroy the living sense of our economy, and all that we shall build will be built under the terror of the great factories, the great power stations—for the glory of the dictators or for a social myth! Such was the work of the Pharaohs and for the Pharaohs; such are the achievements of totalitarian dictatorships. But the philosophy as well as the creative work of free men is a different matter.

SLOW ROAD TO FULL EMPLOYMENT

An Analysis of the Last Recession

By ALFRED BRAUNTHAL

THE SETBACK which the American economy has been suffering since the late Fall of 1948 has at last forced the American people to make a decision which it has postponed since the end of the war, but which could not be postponed indefinitely. This nation had at last to give an answer to the crucial question: whether its economy should revert to the classical type of capitalist economy of pre-New Deal days characterized by a complete reliance on the self-regulating forces of the market, or whether it should move towards a type of controlled economy in which its employment and production levels can move only upward, but are prevented from gliding downward to any substantial degree by a system of regulatory and compensatory devices applied by the government.

As long as the American economy basked in the sunshine of the postwar boom, the answer to this question could be postponed, but once this boom was over, the buyer's market restored, and the first signs of a serious recession emerged, no further evasion of the fateful decision could be afforded. And as could be expected by everyone who has an understanding of the real needs of the American people and their awareness of their needs, the decision has in principle been in favor of a policy of economic and social security and stability although in actual fact there has been much hedging, wavering, and compromising around this decision.

To understand the full significance of this decision, it should be stressed that an effective system of economic policy geared to the goal of a full-employment economy has never before existed in this country, and that, accordingly, there was no body of experience and tradition that could have guided the actions of the legislators and administrators in the present business recession.

Prior to the New Deal era full employment was the fortuitous

result of automatic market forces. Since these forces were subject to periodic variations—the so-called business cycle—periods of full employment more or less regularly alternated with periods of mass unemployment. True, the government even in the classical capitalist era was not entirely indifferent to the fluctuations in business activity and employment. The Federal Reserve system, for instance, was used as a device to mitigate business fluctuations by measures of monetary and credit policy. But the effects of these measures were so negligible and so little effort was made to supplement them by more effective devices that it is entirely justified to neglect these timid attempts to regulate the automatic forces of the market.

Nor can the New Deal period proper, that is, the period from 1933 until the outbreak of the war, be classified as that of a full-employment economy. The New Deal philosophy was the fertile ground on which the full-employment philosophy has grown; but the New Deal policy, however helpful it might have been in overcoming the worst of the depression of the early 30's and however beneficial it might have been for workers and farmers, for bank depositors and home owners, as well as for big and small businessmen, was never able to solve the employment problem. During the entire period from 1933 through 1940 there was not one year in which the annual average number of unemployed dropped below 7.7 million persons.

The absorption of the unemployed was an accidental result of the war economy. The economic planning which was characteristic of the war economy was directed exclusively toward meeting the needs of the armed forces, not toward full employment. Hence the planning problems which the war economy had to face were entirely different from those which a full-employment policy has to face in the midst of a business recession. The basic problem of the war economy was that of adjusting production and civilian consumption to the gigantic additional demand of the armed forces. The magnitudes involved in this task can be gauged from the fact that military expenditures in 1944 climbed to $88.6 billion, or 42 per cent of the national income. In other words, the war economy had to cope with the problem of a shortage of labor and of all other productive forces, rather than with the problem of under-employment of labor and all other productive factors with which present day full-employment policy is faced.

NEVERTHELESS, the fact that the war economy with one stroke solved the employment problem made a deep impression on a nation which for more than a decade had suffered from grave underemployment. It was under the impact of the war-time full-employment economy that the goal of a peace-time full-employment economy began to take roots in the mind of the American people. But since the problems of the war economy were so fundamentally different from the employment problems of a peace-time economy, the discussions about the problems of a peace-time full-employment policy remained on an entirely academic level.

The same was true of the period immediately following the war. During this period, which lasted for more than three years, the postwar boom took care of the full-employment problem. The war had left in its wake so huge a backlog of unsatisfied demand for durable goods, and the war destruction in Europe had caused so insatiable a hunger for American goods, that for a period nearly as long as the war itself economic conditions in this country resembled those of the war economy. With an employment level moving rapidly into the sixty-million bracket, the postwar economy even topped the record of the war economy.

Thus the whole theoretical and political controversy about full-employment policy which went on in this period of postwar boom still remained in the field of pure speculation. There could be theoretical controversies about the question of whether a full-employment economy requires a national production and employment budget, short-range or long-range planning, governmental marketing contracts of this or that kind, and similar planning devices, or whether it would suffice to stave off threatening economic setbacks by a system of compensatory measures, and, for the rest, to rely on the dynamic forces of the market. There could be political fights about the speed with which war-time controls over the economy ought to be relaxed and abolished and about the extent to which measures aiming at braking the inflationary demand for goods and services ought to be applied lest the full-employment economy of the postwar period be imperiled by an eventual collapse of the price structure. But there could be no doubt whatsoever that in the period immediately after the war the expansionist forces of the economy were so strong that they secured full employment, if not overemployment, without recourse to governmental stimuli.

The proof of the pudding, then, was how the American people would feel and act the moment production would catch up with the pent-up demand both at home and abroad, and the first serious break in the upswing trend of the markets would appear. Would the prestige which the doctrine of the self-regulating system of untrammeled business initiative had regained in the post-war period—and which had been significantly reflected in the election of a Republican Congress in 1946—prove to be so persistent that it could not be shaken even by a serious decline in business activity and employment? And, more particularly, could a business depression be tolerated under the existing political and economic world conditions, with the Soviet government impatiently waiting for the economic crisis in the United States and its inevitable disruptive effect on the Western European countries? Or would it turn out that the urge for economic and social security and stability to which Roosevelt and his New Deal philosophy owed their victory in four successive elections, has remained predominant in the American people and that a system of entirely free market economy without governmental intervention would be accepted only as long as it was able to produce a level of business activity and employment comparable with or even exceeding that of the war economy?

The answer to these truly crucial questions was never given by a political pronouncement or by an authoritative statement about the theoretical basis of a full-employment economy, but it was given in fact by the elections of November, 1948 and by the economic and social policy which was since actually carried out by Congress and the Administration. It is very strange that virtually all the organs of public opinion not only before the election were ignorant of the mood of the electorate, but also after the election have steadfastly misjudged its meaning. Both before and after the election the prevailing public opinion has been that the majority of the electorate, or its legislative representatives, under the spur of the fascinating success of the restoration of a free economy after the war, would be opposed to any further extension of the principle of the "welfare state," that is, of a system in which the government by regulative, compensatory and social security measures guarantees to all classes of society a certain degree of economic and social security and stability. This view has been refuted both by the elections and by the governmental and Congressional actions after the elections.

It appears that what public opinion mainly misjudged was not only

the mood prevailing in the working class, but even more the mood of the lower middle classes, especially the farming class. As to the working class, it was erroneously believed that in the fat years of the postwar boom it had forgotten the lessons of the lean years of the depression. The election propaganda of the labor unions, which, understandably under the circumstances, was concentrated on the fight against the Taft-Hartley Act rather than on the issues of economic and social security and stability, may have contributed to this misjudgment of the working class's primary interests.

AS TO the farmers, two salient facts were overlooked. The first fact is that, as in the interwar period, the drop in farm prices in the present business recession began much earlier and was much more pronounced than the drop in prices of industrial products. Thus the index of grain prices reached its maximum as early as January, 1948, and, at the eve of the election, in October, 1948, had already declined by no less than 33.5 per cent from the January level. The farm price index as a whole began its decline in July, 1948; it decreased 6.4 per cent by the time of the election and 15.4 per cent by July, 1949. These figures compare with a drop in the wholesale price index for all commodities other than farm products and food by only 5.5 per cent from October, 1948—when this index reached its maximum—until July, 1949.

The second fact that has had a bearing on the farmers' political views is that even during the unprecedented agricultural boom of the immediate postwar period governmental farm price subsidies were continued and ran into millions of dollars. The farmers were really afraid that if they threw in their lot with the enemies of the welfare state, the spirit, and even the text, of the Aiken law, adopted by the 80th, Republican-controlled Congress and providing for a gradual reduction in the support prices beginning in 1950, would prevail.

At the 1946 election the farmers were incensed by the futile attempt of the Truman administration to prevent them from reaping the full fruits of the world shortage of farm goods. These feelings were reflected in a switch in the farm vote in favor of the Republicans. But at the 1948 elections the farmers remembered that in times of stress their overpowering urge for economic security and stability was in safer hands under a progressive administration. Hence there was not only a switch

back to the Democratic vote in the rural districts, but Truman actually received more votes in the farm belt than Roosevelt had in 1944.*

Even after the election public opinion was misled by certain class controversies, mainly about labor relations. The fact that no compromise could yet be reached in Congress about an admittedly difficult problem of industrial relations—that of labor conflicts in essential industries—and that as a result of this conflict no compromise could as yet be found for a new labor relations law in place of the Taft-Harley Act, was mistakenly considered proof of the basically conservative position of the majority of the electorate or of its Congressional representatives.

The position which the Congress has actually taken with respect to the decisive problems of economic and social security and stability disproves such a view. Surely, the farmers and small business interests, which in Congress, as in the population, hold the balance of power, are opposed to any radical transformation of society that might seriously impair their property interests. But they are not deterred from pursuing their true economic and social interests by the continuous pounding of big business organizations against the terrible dangers of a "socialistic" development which lurk in any regulatory or compensatory governmental measures designed to secure full employment and a high level of production.

These fundamental interests of the workers, farmers, and small businessmen have been imperilled, in one way or another, by the creeping business recession of the first half of 1949. The recession has meant for the farmers, as has been previously mentioned, a drop in farm prices by 15.4 per cent from June, 1948 to July, 1949, which was not matched by an adequate decrease in the prices of goods needed by them. The price index of all commodities used for farm production decreased from its maximum in June, 1948 to July, 1949 by only 4.6 per cent. Since farm production failed to increase in proportion to the relative decline in farm prices, farm income decreased 16.8 per cent from the second quarter of 1948 to the same period of 1949.

For businessmen the recession has meant a continuous drop in industrial production by 16.9 per cent from the postwar peak, which was

* See the author's article "Labor and State in America: New Departure," in *Modern Review,* January 1949, in which it was stated that in the nine states outside the South in which the farm population in 1940 formed more than 40 per cent of the population of these states (Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Montana, Idaho, and New Mexico), the Democratic vote increased from 2,108,653, or 46.9 per cent of the total vote in these states in 1944 to 2,336,697, or 50.5 per cent in 1948.

reached in October, 1948, until July, 1949; a severe loss in the purchasing power of their wholesale or retail customers; and a shrinkage in the unit value of the inventories which they had taken over from the boom period with its inflated price level.

For the workers the recession has meant the reemergence of mass unemployment for the first time since the beginning of the war. If for a labor force of more than sixty million persons an unemployment figure of two million can be considered a normal minimum—the so-called frictional unemployment, caused by seasonal variations in production, switching from job to job, etc.—an unemployment level of 3½ to 4 million, as it has prevailed in the first seven months of 1949, is tantamount to a genuine, that is, non-frictional unemployment of 1½ to 2 million. In addition, the employed workers have suffered from the reemergence of part-time work, which was reflected in the drop in average weekly working hours in manufacturing industries from 40.2 and 39.8 in June and July, 1948 respectively to 38.9 and 38.8 respectively in the same period of 1949.

To these grave material losses must be added the severe repercussions abroad of the business setback in this country. The "health conditions" of the Western European economies are still so delicate and their dependence on the American economy is still so great that the smallest decline in the capacity of the American markets to purchase foreign goods is felt abroad as a grave disturbing factor. The aggravation of the "dollar crisis" in the Western European countries, especially in Great Britain, is nothing else but a reflex of the American business recession, which has curtailed the capacity of the American markets for foreign goods. Any failure to see these warning signals on the horizon of Europe, to understand the dangers involved in this crisis for the democratic sector of the world, and to counteract them by an effective full-employment policy in this country, would have indicated a high degree of political blindness.

True, from the outset there have been encouraging prospects for a comparatively mild and short course of the business recession. Even our domestic Communists have not dared to make too much of it by predicting a real economic disaster. The forces of resistance to a serious economic decline are obviously much too strong. But an analysis of these forces will show, as President Truman rightly noted in his economic mid-year report to Congress, that most of them owe their existence and

strength precisely to those factors—all of them products of the New Deal philosophy—which are generally considered important devices of a full-employment policy. In this category belong, in addition to the effective resistance of the labor unions to wage cuts,* the farm price support system, which has its maximum effect in recession periods; the unemployment insurance system, which acts as a purchasing power buffer in periods of declining employment; the old-age insurance system, which has similar effects, especially since the number of aged persons who choose—or are forced to choose—old-age benefits rather than wages increases in such periods; aid to foreign countries, especially the Marshall Plan, which, whatever its motives, has very favorable effects on the volume of domestic production in recession periods.

Since the relationship between the New Deal elements of the present economy and the stimulating factors which have been mitigating the fall in production and employment and which are strengthening the recovery tendencies is so obvious, it becomes understandable that it is not only the workers, but also the farmers and small businessmen—in spite of the outcry of the ideological spokesmen of the middle classes against the "encroachments of socialism"—who have a common interest in continuing the existing governmental security and stabilizing measures, and in strengthening them by effective new measures of this kind. In other words, there is a common interest of these groups in a full-employment policy—that is, in a policy designed to strengthen the resistance to an economic decline and ultimately to restore the pre-recession level of production and employment and to create the basis for a further expansion of the economy.

An objective account of the policy of the 81st Congress will reveal that the interests of the majority groups of the population have by and large been reflected in the actions of their legislative representatives. It should be clearly understood, though, that not all the interests of all these groups are common to all of them. Conflicts of interests between workers and farmers, let alone the lower urban middle classes, have run through the entire New Deal period and have not ceased now. The omission of the entire agricultural sector from all social security and

* Average hourly earnings in manufacturing industries remained practically unchanged in the period from January to July, 1949 while living costs declined by 1.4 per cent. From September, 1948, when living costs reached their maximum, to July, 1949 living costs decreased by 3.4 per cent while in the same period average hourly earnings increased by 1.5 per cent.

labor relations laws has been one of the devices for settling these conflicts, while other devices have consisted in compromises of all kinds between progressive and conservative solutions of economic and social problems.

The compromise character of the anti-recession measures taken or contemplated so far by the 81st Congress is conspicuous. But it is a compromise which is still based on the concepts of a full-employment policy, however attenuated this might prove to be in some instances.

The main features of the economic and social stabilization policy of the Congress and the Administration can be outlined, in a five point program, as follows:

(1) In the important field of *public finance* the concept of the advocates of a full-employment policy—so forcefully and courageously underlined in President Truman's mid-year message—that in a period of business decline budget deficits must be incurred in order to prevent or reduce deficits in the national economy has in actual practice, if not as readily in principle, been adopted. In spite of the powerful position which the economy bloc in Congress still holds, its attempt to balance the budget by huge cuts in expenditures has failed. To be sure, a number of concessions had to be made to the economy bloc. Painful cuts in expenditures were effected, of which those in the armed forces demonstrated most clearly the inconsistencies of a policy which, while aiming at the stimulation of employment in the economy as a whole, creates unemployment by discharging a whole army of public employees.

ANOTHER CONCESSION to the advocates of the balanced budget was the failure to reduce any taxes. It would have been a powerful spur to production if those taxes which directly affect the demand for certain goods, such as the war excise taxes, had been substantially reduced. In this case the President himself headed the opposition to tax cuts, obviously for tactical reasons, in order not to strengthen the forces which insist on cuts in expenditures.

Yet in spite of all these compromises, the outcome of the battle for unbalancing the budget has been a budget deficit which is at present estimated at approximately 5,500,000,000 dollars for the current fiscal year. Compared with a national income of $209.7 billion—the annual rate of the national income estimated for July, 1949—the magnitude of this supplementary injection of purchasing power into the

economy may not be considered as overwhelming. But to this deficit must be added as further injections of purchasing power, first, the excess of expenditures over income in the unemployment insurance system which, on the basis of the figures published for the first four months of 1949, can be estimated at an annual rate of $800 to $1,000 million, and, second, the payment in 1950 to the veterans of about $2,800 million as reimbursement for the unused part of their war insurance premiums.

In any event, even if the sum total of budget deficit, unemployment benefit payments, and veterans' reimbursements is not of an overwhelming magnitude, the loss in national purchasing power as a result of the business recession has not yet been very grave either. Moreover, once the principle of a compensatory budget deficit is recognized as a matter of practice, its extent can be more easily adjusted to the need for compensatory public expenditures in recession periods.

(2) Another important sector of full-employment policy in which progress has been undeniable is that of *public housing*. Full-employment policy in periods of business decline requires a heavy outlay for public investments, in order to supplement deficient private investments. The most desirable method of increasing public investment is generally the expansion of public works, and a number of states and municipalities have already begun to increase these outlays. The Federal government, while also preparing for a sizable expansion of public works, and meanwhile concentrating public works in areas particularly hard hit by unemployment, has regarded residential construction as the investment field most badly in need of expansion and stimulation by governmental activities. It is, indeed, in view of the existing grave deficit in dwellings, only consistent in the present recession period to concentrate governmental investment activities both on public housing and on assistance to private residential construction.

In both respects the 81st Congress has done more than any of its predecessors, and much more than was expected by a sceptical public opinion. The adoption of the Housing Act, which provides for Federal subsidies for up to 200,000 lowest-rent dwelling units in the first year of its operation, in conjunction with the housing credit bill, designed to assist in the private construction of lower middle-class houses by Federal insurance and loan aids in the amount of up to $4.5 billion, makes it very likely that residential construction, perhaps already in 1949, but

even more so in the following year, will reach a level unprecedented in the history of this or any other country.

(3) Quantitatively, and maybe also in its intensity, the greatest stimulating effect is bound to result from the *foreign aid program*. True. the new Marshall plan appropriation does not mean an increased injection of purchasing power into the economy, but it continues an additional buying capacity which has been effective for more than a year and which is now much more than before needed by the American economy. Moreover, the military aid program, or at least that part of it which will consist of new military equipment, will create additional demand for domestic goods. This will hold true possibly even to a larger extent for all measures which will be undertaken to implement point four of the Truman program—aid to underdeveloped countries. This program is still in a preparatory stage in which the actual outlay of capital is still negligible. But once concrete investment programs have been worked out, there will hardly be any other limits to investment than those determined by the capacity of American industry to produce in excess of the effective domestic and European demand and by the readiness of the American people to branch off part of its productive capacity for investment in underdeveloped countries.

(4) The fourth great sector of governmentally directed purchasing power is the field of *social legislation*. It is true that the 81st Congress has not yet finished its tasks in this field, but there can hardly be any doubt about its readiness to act in a really progressive way.

Two great social programs are under way. One is the minimum wage bill which has after many ups and downs finally was enacted. To be sure, the farm bloc has again exploited its key political position in this field, by lopping off farm-connected industries from the scope of this legislation, while the small business men have similarly succeeded in wringing exemptions from Congress for the retail trade. But for the industrial workers as a whole the 75 cent minimum means a great step forward in the attainment of a decent standard of living and in their resistance to wage cuts, so vitally important as a stabilizing factor in periods of business recession. It should be noted that an hourly minimum wage of 75 cents means, on the basis of present living costs, a purchasing power of 78 per cent in excess of the original 25 cent minimum of 1938, and of 10 per cent in excess of the 40 cent minimum which went into effect a few years after the enactment of the minimum wage law of 1938.

A step of no less outstanding importance, both from the view point of social security and from that of additional power, is the now adopted expansion and liberalization of the old age and survivor benefit system. Although any expansion of this system also mean the introduction of a new tax with deflationary effects, the favorable effects on purchasing power of substantial increases in benefits are likely to overcompensate for the adverse effects of the new tax.

(5) In addition to all these "modern" devices of a full-employment policy which have been or in all likelihood will be set in motion, the *"orthodox" devices,* which have for a long time been generally recognized, even by conservative economists, as legitimate stabilizing factors, have not been neglected. Congress, the Administration, and the Federal Reserve system have acted rather swiftly and energetically by reducing interest rates on certain public debts, by open market operations, by lowering reserve requirements for member banks, and by easing security margins on the trading of stocks. Moreover, Congress has abolished all restrictions upon consumer credits which were established as anti-inflationary measures during and after the war.

It can, of course, not yet be predicted what the cumulative effect of all these measures on economic conditions will be, whether they will suffice to restore and increase the pre-recession level of production and employment or whether additional stimuli will be needed. Psychologically, they have doubtless already exerted a beneficial influence; a note of moderate optimism in business circles is unmistakeable.* But whatever the concrete effects of these stimulating measures might be, their systematic application by Congress and Administration shows that the majority of the American people has abandoned the belief in the self-regulatory power of the free market economy and has slowly begun to learn to counteract spells of business decline by compensatory and stabilizing measures. Of course, it is but the beginning, both technically and politically. The opposing forces, which see in every step toward a full-employment economy an attack on their vested interests in the unlimited freedom of enterprise, are still very strong and still have the power of tradition and the organs of public opinion on their side.

* The increase in the industrial production index by 4.9 per cent from July to August, 1949 has been widely held to herald a turning point in the business trend. Actually, this increase only cancelled out an unusual decline in the production index of July, which was mainly due to vacations of workers.

Moreover, the American system of organization and distribution of political power is extremely unfit for the quick and systematic decisions necessary for the satisfactory operation of a full-employment policy. In a parliamentary two-party system, such as exists in Great Britain and a number of other countries, the administrative and the legislative branches are so closely allied that the government has the power to act quickly and according to preconceived plans. Governmental systems of this type are excellently equipped for adjusting their economic and social policy to quickly changing business conditions with a minimum of delay and friction and as completely as the party in power deems fit. In a system in which administrative and legislative powers are separated, as in the United States, and in which parliamentary majorities change with every issue, it is, of course, incomparably more difficult to adjust governmental policy to changing business conditions.

But in spite of all these difficulties the hope is well warranted that with the growing awareness of the beneficial effects of a full-employment policy on the stability of the economy and the security of the people, their interest in improving the administrative and legislative machinery of this policy will also grow. This does not mean that an effective full-employment policy would require any fundamental changes in the institutions of this country. There are enough devices within the framework of the existing American institutions which would permit of more rapid and more thorough adjustments of economic and social policy to changing business conditions, if only there be a firm determination to steer towards this goal.

In other words, what is needed above all is a political and psychological atmosphere favorable to a courageous and effective full-employment policy. That the atmosphere has already, if slowly and haltingly, begun to change in favor of such a policy has been shown by this analysis. To improve this atmosphere further, to heighten the understanding of the people for a policy designed to act in the interest of their own economic and social security, is the chief task with which the progressive forces of this country will be faced in the coming Congressional elections.

NOTE: While the statistical data referred to in this article have been computed on the basis of July, 1949, the trend indicated in these data has not changed since then.

ECSTATIC IN BLACKFACE

The Negro as a Song-and-Dance Man

By BERNARD WOLFE

EVERY COMMUNITY calls out a string of "unnecessary" sounds and movements from its members. In these mass rituals of voice and body the whole subjective state of a people can be read, its fulfillments and its frustrations. These "non-useful" exercises must be doubly revealing in America—for here they have become overwhelmingly negroid in both content and form.

"The plaintive and derisive songs of an oppressed people," an anthropologist notes, ". . . have become the background of the whole society's pleasures and distractions." And, according to our foremost dance critic, the Negro "has certainly given us at least the basis for all our popular dances." Strange, this "esthetic" commerce across the rigid barriers of caste. In at least two key areas of our mass culture the pursuit of happiness narrows down pretty much to a pursuit of the Negro; becomes, in fact, a mass touching—even fondling—of the Untouchable. . . .

Who, exactly *is* the Negro who sings these "plaintive and derisive" songs for white consumption, dances these "unrestrained" dances? Are we being treated here to a display of the "genuine" Negro—the essential, distillate Negro, propelled by trance, emotionally supercharged, spontaneous—his dynamic "un-European" self surging out to us through its "natural" media, itchy feet and throbbing vocal cords?

We like to think so. We pride ourselves on knowing the "real" Negro, the "authentic" Negro; and, over long decades, we have come to equate him with one of our primary Europe-evading folk heroes—the ecstatic song-and-dance man. But does the Negro "give" so freely, through his muscles and his mouth, simply because he is "being himself"? Or is it rather because white America, craving a song and dance it cannot generate itself, so ardently wants him to?

* * *

WE SENSE the broader cultural backdrop behind the Negro song-and-dance man: it is the whole formalized and institutionalized American joy-quest. The pursuit of happiness, of course, is far more than an

abstract political guarantee; in living terms it is a mass striving which fans out to embrace, ultimately, all those things Americans pursue in the hope of being made happy. And almost everywhere in these "non-useful," "non-pecuniary" reaches of our culture the image of the Negro crops up with jumping-jack persistence, blithely hurdling caste fences.

Our entertainment industries have always featured the Negro prominently, and nearly always in set "happifying" images. From post-colonial times on there has been a strong Negroid component, not only in our song and dance music, but in our vaudeville, drama, cartoons, popular humor, and related fields; and today it shows up, sometimes overwhelmingly, in movies, best sellers, jukeboxes, dance halls, and so on. But this cultural negrophilia spreads far beyond the amusement industries. If the entrepreneurs of these industries play up Negro themes it must be because there is a steady current of mass interest in them, and that interest must make itself felt in other areas too.

It does; standard amusement fare quite aside, America is inundated with many more tangible kinds of commodities to which one stock negroid image or another is attached. One afternoon's browsing through any fair-sized shopping center will turn up an imposing array of those mass-produced images: on food labels, wallpaper, napkins, nylon stockings, perfumes, bandanas, charm bracelets, earrings, sweaters, men's shorts, lampshades, ashtrays, figurines, the billboard and magazine ads for a wide variety of food and drink. A good deal of our standard decor, in fact, both modern and traditional, is dominated by the negroid motif. All this, of course, in addition to the Negro's highly visible presence in many best sellers, children's books, dolls, toys, and masks, on postcards and greeting cards.

Most of these articles are useful, true enough; but the Negro image is not built into them for its "use-value." It pleases us in some non-functional way—amuses, titillates, entices. It is somehow essential to certain of our pleasures and distractions, adds a rousing fillip to others. And when such a motif endures so doggedly in the culture of a nation, we can guess that it is heaved up from the more profound "fun-loving" depths of the mass mind; there must be some deepset mechanism behind its constant display. An urgent methodological problem is posed here. Can any one instance of this pariah-display—the lindy hop craze, say, or Uncle Remus, or the minstrel show, or jazz—add up to very much

unless you see the general process unwinding behind the particular instance?

But most of us who are drawn to the negroid components in our culture are swept away by our enthusiasm for the immediate. That goes equally for the jazz cultist, the devotee of Katherine Dunham or the Savoy Ballroom, the fan of Amos and Andy, the member of Kiwanis or Rotary who performs in his lodge's minstrel show year after year, the follower of Lillian Smith or even Richard Wright, or the housewife who buys those cute doilies with beaming Negro mammies parading across them. We rarely see that our momentary pursuit of this or that Negro-in-effigy is part of a more inclusive and enduring pursuit. Intent on having our particular "needs" catered to, we seldom ask why we so often require the Negro—generally in quite unreasonable facsimile—as the caterer.

We have many fat volumes on jazz now. Most of them, it seems fair to say, suffer from this myopic inability to peer beyond the local and specific. Arguing heatedly for or against this or that form of jazz, their authors most often miss the real point—that the things they embrace or reject, as well as the embracers and rejectors themselves, are all part of a very complex and pervasive cultural process.

What is that process? Perhaps it might be defined as *the mass production and consumption of stock images of the Negro in the pleasure-culture of white America*—including, of course, the image of the Negro as an ecstatic song-and-dance man. From beginning to end this process is sparked by an intense, at times almost obsessive, cultural interest in the Negro—in the midst of a caste situation whose whole premise is that the Negro, as pariah, hardly deserves a second glance.

IT MAY BE objected that this syncretic view makes a hopeless jumble of quite unrelated things. The jazzuits would grant, probably, that when the image of the Negro keeps showing up on greeting cards and food labels, or in the movies and on the radio, it is worth taking a sharp look at. That image is obviously manufactured by the white man, who controls these media, for the consumption of whites, and thus does not involve the Negro *creatively* at all. The white man would appear to be dramatizing his own composite picture of the Negro, the distillate Negro, or hiring live Negroes to dramatize it for him. But, we shall be told, the case is different with jazz, jitterbugging, zoot, and jive. In such

"spontaneous" overflows the Negro is stepping out as an unshackled creator in his own right—he is voluntarily, and without cues, putting on display *his* music, *his* dance, *his* fashions, *his* lingo. For once the Negro is "being himself" instead of conforming to a model laid down for him by the white man. And whites either accept his "spontaneous" cultural creations or reject them, without influencing in the slightest the creative process or the "genuine" ad-libbing Negro personality behind it.

There are in our pleasure-culture, we are told, certain areas in which the Negro creates himself in his *own* image. The Negro song-and-dance man is hailed as such a *self*-creation; his sounds and movements are taken to reflect only his own "insides." When this "uncued" ecstatic appears, it is alleged, the whites are mere passive spectators, memorizing his ad libs for future use.

But in these pariah-elite exchanges the emotional traffic is not always one-way; it sometimes happens that the "spectator" is really the star performer—by proxy. Most often, despite the claims of many whites to an uncanny sort of racial omniscience, their concept of "the Negro as he really is" turns out to be a coy fiction, designed to camouflage the Negro as the white world sees him and forces him to behave. *By a devious interracial irony the "creative" Negro, far from being his own spontaneous self, may actually be dramatizing the white man's image of the "spontaneous" Negro "as he really is."* Ad libs, too, can be cunningly cued; even ecstasy, or what passes for it, can be an extremely learned response.

What we take, in the singing and dancing Negro, for his own self-portrait may very well be a composite portrait which the white world has slapped together haphazardly out of its own emotional leftovers and flung over the Negro. *We* may be creating, via the Negro, what we could not create in our own persons. So that *the "happifying" Negro ecstatic we pursue so hotly may be a lot closer to us than we think; he may be our own phantom self—in blackface.*

MORE AND more we are coming round to the view that the pariah in any caste society is in large part molded by the master's image of him. The anti-Semite, says Sartre, creates the Jew.

The Indian Untouchable, for example, believed that he was genuinely untouchable—he "knew" that any Brahmin master who came in contact with his person would be contaminated perhaps even mortally.

* * *

In the same way, the Australian primitive "knew" that it was fatal to let his eyes fall on that taboo object, his mother-in-law; he knew it so well that, when the enjoined looking took place by accident, he sometimes dropped dead in his tracks. This is a very potent and steadying form of "self-knowledge," derived from unblinking contemplation of the "self" in the mirror of one's culture and resting on absolute faith in that mirror.

But if the Hindu Untouchable doubted the evidence in the mirror no more than did the Australian bushman, what he saw there was very different from what the bushman saw. Any accepted member of a community senses that those who define him consider him a projection of themselves, and approve of him as long as he continues to resemble them. The mirroring thus works both ways: mirror and thing mirrored are indissolubly one. The pariah, on the other hand, finds that those who define him consider him the negation of what they value in themselves: he is an object of contempt. Where one is beckoned by his open-armed fellows with the promise of endorsement, the other is waved aside by the stand-offish elite as an abomination.

Still, there was probably little sullen resignation in the average Untouchable's attitude. He looked upon himself, quite simply, as a man made of a certain unalterable type of clay; if a Brahmin touched him by accident he was as horrified as the Brahmin by this "violation" of his personality. And, it goes without saying, he never dared offer his song and dance to the Brahmin, for he knew that his cultural excrescences were as tainted as his own person and that cultural touches were as abhorrent as physical or social ones. In part "the" Negro, too, must be this sort of "reflex being"—what Gunnar Myrdal calls a "reactive personality"—led by ese encompassing glare of his culture to think that he is, after all, something like the lowly thing his masters think he is. But the caste system has never taken such totalitarian hold of the American unconscious as it presumably did for long decades of the Hindu; If it had, jazz, jitterbugging and jive could never have evaded their cultural quarantine in the gallion and the ghetto. It follows that there must also be a more conscious level of personality shaping—one quite unique with the American Negro—on which an entirely different order of "distortion" takes place.

For possibly two thousand years and more the Hindu Untouchable acted not simply *as if* he were a carrier of contamination—he acted as

he did because he *"was"* such a carrier and "knew" himself as such. America has never been able to convince the Negro—or itself—of his pariah identity in that all but absolute sense. Even if no other inconsistencies had showed up, our unflagging *cultural* interest in the Negro would by itself have plunged all our caste premises in doubt. For if the pariah is really so unworthy, why do we ogle and ape him so? Why do we rain social blows and heap cultural caresses on him so indiscriminately? The pariah who feels himself wooed even as he is warded off, beckoned and banned all at once, understandably is thrown into a certain confusion about himself.

In part, too, the Negro must sense that he deviates from his master's official picture of him, the one on which the whole structure of caste rests. He gleans that, far from being *merely* an abomination, he is in some way an object of considerable admiration and envy too. But in a world controlled by whites, he must conceal his inner departures from the derogatory official norms they have worked out for him; everything depends on it. If he is not wholly a "reactive personality," he must pretend to be. When the reflex falters, a falseface must be clapped on.

Unless, of course, the white man will not take offense at such personality "lapses." That happens in very special cases, as when Brer Rabbit turns into Bigger Thomas—or when New Orleans jazz, largely an accommodation to the mask, suddenly erupts into bebop, a partial jibe at the mask.

There is, then, a nimble interplay of image, reflex and falseface across the caste lines which is death to all real spontaneity. It is nowhere more striking than in the entertainment fields featuring the "spontaneous" Negro. Understandably: the Negro is everywhere required to play a part, whether reflexively or maskedly, and in the entertainment areas he is paid for his prowess at play-acting.

We do read Richard Wright, of course; we do listen to bebop. But, by and large, except in certain flitting masochistic moods, whites will not seek out Negro performers in order to have their cherished racial images torn to shreds. Entertainment is no longer entertainment when the consumer's psyche is ruffled rather than soothed. Generally speaking, we prefer the masked aggressions of Brer Rabbit to the naked ones of Bigger Thomas.

On the stage and the bandstand, therefore, the type-Negro, professional distillate of his "race," retains his mask. He personifies the

amiable unworthy—with a most interesting set of motor and oral tics. And he brings it off with such deceptively "natural" ease that the white spectator can go away convinced that he has been observing "the Negro as he really is." So, for that matter, can the Negro himself, in many cases. But the real manufacturer of this spontaneity is the white man in the audience.

All this is as true of the whites who admire and lionize the Negro as it is of those more numerous whites who are scornful of him. Negrophiles, no less than negrophobes, have their own pet notions as to what the Negro "really" is, and become incensed when the flesh-and-blood Negro shatters these notions. Witness the indignation of the white cultists of "primitive" New Orleans jazz when young ghetto Negroes step abruptly out of the Southern folksy-Negro mold to create the super-sophisticated music of bebop—or their indifference when the barefoot levee stomper slips into ballet shoes and enrolls in Martha Graham's classes.

* * *

THE NEGRO, the "distillate" Negro, soon learns his lesson. Whether or not he feels at one with the white man's image of him, he had better act as though he did—at least, he had better "conform to type" when he ventures forth before a white audience. Even the slave who built underground railways and fomented revolts often looked on the surface like a very docile Uncle Remus or Uncle Tom—the genial, good-natured "Negro" whom whites loved to portray on the minstrel stage. And anybody who has seen Negro entertainers relaxing among themselves, with their professional masks off, knows how shrewdly and devastatingly they will in private mock the "type" personalities they are obliged to assume when they're "on."

But in all this routine hypocrisy the Negro performer is only echoing the experience of his people. Most Negroes in our culture spend most of their lives "on"; the eyes of the white community seldom wander far from them. Every Negro is to some extent a performer.

Reflex, or the simulation of reflex: like most of the Negro's cultural creations, jazz has traditionally teetered between these two extremes. Yet there are those who make a cult of this or that negroidism without noting this dizzy shuttling between genuine robotism and mock robotism in the Negro performer; who consider the object of their interest, whether he acts reflexively or calculatedly, "the Negro as he really is."

Aren't they missing the whole point of the performance? Instead of grasping the phenomenon that unfolds before their eyes they themselves become part of the phenomenon—for their eyes cue the performance. The more they relish the Negro on the stage as "authentic," blinding themselves to the degree of calculation in the performance, the more must the Negro performer cling to the masks which they take for real faces. It makes no difference whether he feels at home in them or not. His audience does not recognize that order of subjective problem. The relationship across the footlights is not between subject and subject, but between subject and object.

Myrdal sums up this proliferating irony in a suggestive phrase: *the tyranny of expectancy.* The white man's expectant imaging is the tyrant that bludgeons the pariah's personality into being what it "really" is in a caste situation, whether as automaton or as masquerader. But anybody who does not see the subtle dividing line between reflex and falseface, who overlooks the point at which *because* becomes *as if* and conscious intent crops into the performance, has closed his eyes to the real meaning of most Negro artforms. At the same time, he guarantees that the Negro will continue to create himself in everybody's image *but* his own.

The truth about the Negro performer is that he is required to be a *Negro impersonator.* This truth has been hauled out into the open and even made into a public joke in our popular culture: for more than a century, whenever an occasional Negro *was* allowed to perform in a minstrel show, he too had to blacken his face with burnt cork and whiten his lips with corn-starch. But here, once more, what is a joke in mass culture only reflects a quite unfunny fact in mass experience. The very same idea has long been codified in Southern caste etiquette, which requires each individual Negro to personify the white man's image of the composite Negro. This type-casting of a whole race, however, does not take place only in the South: many Northerners, too, feel no reticence in addressing *all* Negro porters and bootblacks by the generic name of "George."

Myrdal records more than one case of a white Southerner who actually could not recognize Negroes as Negroes when they dropped the role of impersonator. And Negroes, aware of this irony, sometimes toy with it mockingly in their social maneuvering—late in 1948, for example, the newspapers carried front-page stories about a Northern Negro

scholar who, wearing an outlandish piece of Oriental headgear, travelled widely through the South, eating in Jim Crow restaurants and chatting boldly with the white help. It may help us to understand the new music of bebop if we remember that quite a few Negro bop artists have become converts to Mohammedanism: they assume Arabian names. study the Koran, salaam to Mecca at sunset—and sometimes even appear in public wearing turbans, so that unsuspecting whites will take them for something other than "distillate" American Negroes. Needless to say, the deception often works.

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THE MOMENT his performance takes on the quality of *as if,* the Negro performer slips from the reactive to the active: object metamorphoses stealthily into subject. Now creation of a sort *does* become possible, and the Negro begins to contribute something of his own to the final effect—most often, at first, as a retoucher. Increasingly he adds dabs of satire to the white man's readymade image, corresponding to the taunts he invents behind the mask. These touches, now growing bolder and bolder, announce that a radically new Negro culture is somewhere in the offing.

For the purely passive, pliable, reactive side of the Negro is steadily losing ground to the consciously manipulated mask which he dons as part of a deliberate act. That is, the extent to which he really feels himself to be what the white man thinks he is is dwindling, and the extent to which he *pretends* to be this or that, to achieve certain effects among certain groups of whites, is on the rise. And in that murky inner space where the mechanical fades into the willful lies the source of most Negro art-forms. If the shift is ever completed the mask will be thrown off entirely and a startling new crop of art-forms will mushroom forth: bop and its new dance-form, the applejack, already point the way. The puppet is striving desperately to become its own prime mover.

The Lena Horne who flashes her sultry smile on the screen bears little resemblance, certainly, to the dead-serious Lena Horne who tells an interviewer: "Once I had as much hatred for the whites as they had for me. I'd like to be treated like everybody, not like a freak. I resent having to be normal abnormally." And, in fact, Negro entertainers like Miss Horne are beginning to balk at the standard "distillate" roles they are given to play, even at the risk of their careers. The

insurrection against the tyrannical image is gathering momentum: the lazybones Negro comedian, significantly, has just about disappeared from the stage and screen.

It amounts to this: the American caste system, which never set too well on the national mind, is now losing its hold entirely on the Negro's inner life. If he still goes through the motions of caste ritual, on or off the stage, it is now a maneuver rather than a reflex, carried off with all sorts of subtle interpolations not called for by the script. These interpolations more and more come to be the real content of the Negro's cultural "gifts" to his masters in this transitional phase. Above all, his much-mimicked song and dance are increasingly colored by them—when, indeed, they don't reject the falseface entirely.

The ingredients in the Negro personality—passive enslavement by the white man's tyrant image; active and quite deliberate outward conformity to that image, increasingly tinged with satire—have been shifting rapidly in our own century. Even before our unheeding eyes they have gone through drastic reshufflings: Li'l Black Sambo yields to Joe Louis, Louis Armstrong to Dizzy Gillespie, Bill Robinson to Pearl Primus, Bessie Smith to Marian Anderson. And, here and there, something new is in process of being added: a rebellion against both reflex and falseface, a disowning of the white man's image entirely.

It is very much as though the Hindu Untouchable, breaking painfully out of the crust of his culture, had suddenly realized that for two thousand years he had been a sleep-walker enacting a vast lie as though it were gospel truth. If he decided to keep up the masquerade for quite practical reasons—or simply because, as yet, he had no fully composed face of his own in reserve for such emergencies—it would now be on the basis of *as if* rather than *because*. And no doubt he would inject a little "face-saving" satire into his rendition of the role.

The unique thing about the American Negro is that he has *never* been fully able to take what he saw in his culture's mirror for gospel truth. All along, from the day the first slaver discharged its human cargo on American shores, his life has had overtones of *as if*. No doubt that not-quite-real quality of his daily experience has had a lot to do with crystallizing the Negro's engulfing sense of the absurd and his penchant for sheer nonsense. A burgeoning giggle can be traced in the Negro dance from the beginning—from the plantation shuffle and cake-

walk to the triple lindy and the applejack. There was already a leavening of irreverent laughter in New Orleans jazz, even in the earlier blues; and bop is, above all, a satirical music.

"The social effects of art seem such an accidental thing," Ortega y Gasset notes, "so remote from the esthetic essence that it does not quite appear how, starting from them, we can ever hope to penetrate into the inner frame of styles." Yet when he set out to study the European music which begins with Debussy, Ortega found that he could make no sense of its "esthetic essence" without first looking into its "social effects." "The problem was strictly esthetic, and yet it turned out that the shortest way of tackling it started from a sociological fact: the unpopularity of the new music."

But how to get at the essence of the Negro's music—and of the dance which accompanies it—from the spirituals and stomps to New Orleans, swing and bebop? One may have to start with another sociological fact: the *popularity* of this new music and dance. For these sounds and movements are popular on a truly massive scale—among precisely those who shun their creators in daily life. And this paradoxical fact, woven so deeply into the American ethos, can hardly be lost on their alert creator. It must have very much to do with the kinds of sounds and movements he creates; may, indeed, provide the framework for their "inner frame of styles." When an elite poaches culturally on its own pariah over many decades, it can happen that the social effects of the pariah's creations seep back into them to infuse their esthetic essences; that the sociological all but floods the esthetic.

In Negro music and dance, assuredly, the profounder truths are more often sociological than esthetic. That is precisely the cramping limitation of all pariah culture, especially of that intended for export across caste lines. For its content is ultimately the creation of its intended audience, and the apparent creator is most typically only a middleman between the white as tyrannical psychic impresario and the same white as passive sidelines consumer.

The Negro's role in all this is hardly one of "self-expression." He simply dispenses to his masters the wish-filled image that emanated from them in the first place—while adding more and more pointed comments under his breath.

THE CORE of the jazz cult, to be sure, has always been made up of intensely "esthetic" whites who prefer to wave away the more drab and more sober facts of life coming under the heading of sociology. In many cases their flight to the negroid is dictated by this urge to evade the grubby social realities which, according to the victimization myths they have about themselves, invade and choke their own daily lives. The magic circles of negroidism in our culture—Harlem, 52nd Street, jazz, jitterbugging, the marijuana-cocaine-heroine-benzedrine-seconal cults—are for such whites an area of refuge from reality; ostensibly from social reality, actually from their own masochistic misreading of that reality. There only incorrigible "ecstatics," whose vast internal funds of spontaneous joy enable them to sneer at the sociological, are looked for and cherished.

In these very special joy-areas the Negro is regarded as a capsule of undiluted "estheticism," immune to the arrows of outer circumstance. Why it should be thought that the Negro, smothered by the harshest set of social circumstances in America, should be the only American fully insulated against circumstance, is a little difficult to understand; but perhaps what is wanted here is the most dramatic demonstration that can be had of the-subjective-conquering-the-social. Feeling crushed by circumstance themselves, negrophiliac whites prefer to see the Negro as a pre-social creature in whom the romping subjective is king; the Negro must be defined from "within" because we feel ourselves so thoroughly puppetized from "without." The theory would seem to be that the Negro is lucky to be a pariah: banished to the outskirts of the community, he thus evades all the pressures and batterings to which one is subjected at the center and which are lethal to the "inner spark."

In this view estheticism—which here means little more than emotionality, instinct-release, the good time: in short, the stock forms of happiness we pursue—is a luxury of the periphery. It denotes a carefree pleasure-bound state which must be given up when one becomes "serious" and enters into the life of the work-a-day community. In our wistful social geography, the esthetic dwells on the outskirts. The white esthete or would-be esthete is shocked, therefore, and even feels betrayed, when his fringe-Negro's joyous brow becomes furrowed by the sober concerns of the orthodox: by "serious" dance and "serious" music, among other things. This, to the white, smacks of selling a priceless birthright. It amounts to trading ecstasy for respectability, sex for

prestige, spontaneity for technique, folk vigor for sophisticated gentility, the solar plexus for the prefrontal lobe.

But there is a vast irony here which escapes the white esthete entirely. He does not see that his attempt to evade the sociological through jazz cultism is in itself a sociological fact of no mean importance —which makes such "evasion" all the more impossible for his Negro folk-hero. His anti-sociological attitude only helps to mire jazz more deeply than ever in the trap of social circumstance.

By turning to Negro art-forms to sidestep harrying social "irrelevancies" the white joy-seeker helps to perpetuate an image of the Negro artist as a "natural" singing and dancing creature who is impervious to the pummelings of social forces. He seeks the mythological Negro— an inveterately thick-skinned idol who is nourished exclusively from "within," who lusts and exults come what may, whom "nothing gets down." And for the Negro jazz musician the presence of such an esthete in the vanguard of his audience is a *sociological* fact he can't blink. This esthete must be catered to, under penalty of splintering his pure-joy trance and driving him away.

Something of the sort, in fact, has happened to the white devotees of New Orleans. They are today mortally offended by bebop, whose essential grimness and blatancy have unmistakeable sociological overtones, echoing the strife of the restless ghetto; they miss the apparently unembattled, pre-social "complacency" of levee music, imbued with the I-don't-give-a-damn of the serene drifter on the fringe. And bop, as it expands its white audience, is progressively distorted by the squeamishness of many whites about "circumstantial" concerns. Originally an outcry against social circumstance, expressing the ghetto's hunger for the "serious" culture of the orthodox white community, bop is increasingly obliged to disguise itself as a spasm of "self-determined" ecstasy. From its increasingly "unserious" antics one would never guess that the whole driving force of bop is an overpowering lust for respectability.

The "irrelevant" fact remains that jazz, the quite remarkable creation of the American pariah, has a massive cult built around it by the white elite. And the esthetics of any jazz form, as of any dance generated by it, must remain an enormous question mark until within its "frame of styles" is seen the interplay of image, reflex and masquerade which goes on constantly within the caste structure of America.